

THE ARTS SOCIETY BOWDON

PROGRAMME OF SPEAKERS 2025 – 2026



Monday 15 September 2025

ADVENTURES AMONGST NOMADIC TRIBES OF IRAN and AFGHANISTAN - SEARCHING FOR THE WOVEN ART OF THE NOMADS

'My time spent in Iran and Afghanistan during the 1970's began to foster a passion for the wonderful woven art produced by nomads on basic ground looms'. Brian, a dealer and consultant in antique oriental rugs and carpets, discusses his travels and experiences living and travelling in search of the nomadic tribes' woven art.

Brian Macdonald: author of 'Tribal Rugs- Treasures of the Black Tent' updated and re-printed twice. Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society.



Monday 20 October 2025

ROCOCO IN FRANCE – A LIGHTER TOUCH – WATTEAU TO BOUCHER

Buffeted by wars, revolutions and national chauvinism, Rococo is a style that has been defined as frivolous, thoughtless, shallow and inherently elitist by art historians. However, it is the defining style of the 18th Century and continues to exert an influence on contemporary art.

Matthew Morgan: freelance art historian, educator and museum professional. Matthew has lectured at the National Gallery, Royal Collection, Wallace Collection and the V&A. formerly Director in Valuations at Christies.



Monday 17 November 2025

WOMEN, BOTANY and ART – FROM THE GARDEN TO THE EASEL

A visually stunning overview of the role of female artists in floral and botanic art from 16th to 19th Century. This lecture considers themes including perceived divisions between floral and botanic art, the amateur and the professional, and of course the vexed question of marriage!

Twigs Way: is a professional researcher, writer, speaker and published author who is fascinated by the past and intrigued by the role and symbolism of flowers, gardens and landscape in art and culture of all kinds. She lectures for the Cambridge University Botanic gardens.



Monday 8 December 2025

CHRISTMAS BACKSTAGE AT COVENT GARDEN

Every year the Royal Ballet and Opera puts on a season of Christmas shows: How do they cope with magic coaches, snow bags, 17 Sugar plums, 12 Princes and the entire Lower Ballet School backstage? This talk takes you into the wings, down the traps and under the stage including as the legendary Christmas Tree of Nutcracker is moved onto its lift.

Sarah Lenton: has spent her working life in the theatre; her principal employers are the Royal Ballet and Opera, English National Opera, Glyndebourne Festival Opera and Garsington Opera. She writes articles, radio scripts, broadcasts and lectures on ballet and opera.



Monday 19 January 2026

THE GREEN VAULTS OF DRESDEN

In the late 17th Century, 'August the Strong' of Saxony arranged his accumulated treasures in such a way as to be the forerunner of the modern museum. The Green Vaults were where he placed his most curious and valuable objects in their own luxurious chambers, there they remain to this day, glittering, glowing and scintillating, impressing the milling throngs who come to see them as they always have done.

Nicholas Merchant: has worked for some of the major auction houses in London. He lectures extensively in the USA, South Africa, Europe and UK including the V and A, as well as the principal cruise lines. He is a former chairman of the West Yorkshire Art Fund.

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Monday 16th February 2026

BLOOMSBURY GROUP – THE ART OF VANESSA BELL

Avant-garde painter, designer, decorator, inspired colourist, mother and muse, Vanessa Bell was the warm heart of the Bloomsbury Group, a set who Dorothy Parker once described as 'living in squares and loving in triangles'. Navigating the tides of sexual and artistic revolution with tolerance, irreverence and wit she had a central role in the social and aesthetic life of Bloomsbury.

Julia Musgrave: is an Art Historian teaching at the City Literary Institute and the Highgate Literary and Scientific Institution in London. She has a special interest in the social networks of the British art world in the development of the Contemporary Art Society 1910 – 1930.



Monday 16 March 2026

A CLASSICAL GALLERY OF ROGUES: THE ETERNAL PANTHEON

A playful look at the Greek and Roman gods. The Romans adopted the Greek gods, renamed most of them and used them for their own end. These gods continue to appear around us today in surprising forms and in a variety of artistic media. Why and how are their images still used, and what messages do they bear today?

Gillian Hovell: lecturer for the Ashmolean Museum, British Museum and York University. An award-winning writer and author in Latin, archaeology and ancient history and who specialises in relating the ancient world to our modern lives.



Monday 20 April 2026

AND SO, TO BED

This lecture traces the significance and use of beds from the medieval period through to the 18th century, from the great 'State Beds' and also through the history of their construction, decoration and often costly textiles associated with them. In times gone by, married or single, rich or poor, one never slept alone...

Janusz Karczewski-Slowikowski. Antique dealer, freelance lecturer and researcher in English furniture history.



Monday 18 May 2026

THE FOREIGN INVENTION OF BRITISH ART FROM RENAISSANCE TO ENLIGHTENMENT

Why were foreign painters preferred by the aristocracy in London to native-born English painters and what was their impact on English art and art practice. This lecture traces foreign artists from the Tudor period through to the Renaissance and Baroque, their origins and contributions. Holbein, Gerrit van Honthorst, Paulus van Somer, van Dyck, Peter Lely and Rubens.

Leslie Primo: author, broadcaster on BBC, specialises in early Medieval Art and Architecture, Italian Renaissance art, German art in the Reformation, Medici and Patronage, and mythology in the work of Peter Paul Rubens. Lecturer at the National Gallery for 18 years.



Monday 15 June 2026

SECRET ART IN THE PASSPORT

From the wax seal to the microchip, man has exploited the skill of the artist and artisan in his attempt to manufacture a forgery-proof document. The lecture takes you through three centuries of passport design, explains the overt and uncovers the covert to illustrate the defences built in. You will never see your passport in the same light again.

Martin Lloyd: Career in HM Immigration Service, lecturer and broadcaster on local TV and radio.