



THE ARTS
SOCIETY
SOUTH WEST
LONDON

NEWSLETTER 2026



The Arts Society South West London (reg. charity no. 1195700) is a member society of The Arts Society

President: Lady White

Dear Members,

2026 will be our second full year at The Community Church in Werter Road, Putney and what a difference the move there has made. The more central location in Putney makes our lectures more accessible and the technical expertise of Sam means that we can provide hybrid lectures with confidence, allowing us to reach members who are unable to travel.



This year, for our lecture programme, we will delve into the realms of African Art, imagine ourselves in the gardens of expatriates in 19th Century Italy and consider the lure of Tahiti and the French Riviera. We try to cover diverse areas of art and, where possible, keep it relevant. The lecture in March is a nod towards the 250th Anniversary of the US Declaration of Independence and the one in June is (sadly) an issue that still has relevance today.

We hope that you will find something to interest you. Please add the dates to your diary now.

In the last few months, we have tried to organise more Study Events (either days or half-days) and three have been lined up for 2026. We are particularly excited by the Study Day in January when we will welcome John Benjamin (of the Antiques Roadshow) to talk about Jewellery and to discuss items that attendees will be invited to bring along. As usual a Study Day (this year, run by Gavin Plumley) will be linked to our Tour to Ljubljana and Trieste while, in November, we will look at the contribution of Napoleon and Josephine to the arts.

The Visits section of the Newsletter is more of a wish list. It continues to be hard to get venues to accept group bookings far in advance, but we will post details on our website and keep members informed once dates are finalised. We hope to repeat the 2025 tour of The Speakers House to give those who missed it a chance to visit.

Our Awayday in June will have a slightly unusual format (similar to one to Kettles Yard, Cambridge, in 2022). We will travel to Cookham by coach for a lecture on Stanley Spencer and then have tours of the Stanley Spencer Gallery and of Cookham itself, the village that inspired him.



The charitable donation for 2025 went to All Saint's Church on Putney Common for much needed restoration work on the reredos (an image of which was used as our masthead for the 2025 Newsletter) and, this year, the Art Exhibition at the Royal Hospital for Neuro-Disability in Putney allowed us to see the screen-printing equipment purchased with the 2024 grant. A full report on last year can be found in the 2025 Annual Report but some images are included to remind you of our excursions.



Serrie Meakins over the one related to the 2026 Tour. Serrie continues to devise tours that sell out overnight! Behind the scenes (though very visible at the reception desk for lectures) are Winefride Bolton, Alison Breathnoch and Kate Kirkland (our tireless Treasurer) while Felicity Irlam (Secretary) and Gwen Hewitt act as our 'Meet and Greet' team. And what would we do without our volunteers: Sue Tyce and Monica Marshall at the refreshments desk and Luq Agha and Billy Thurston, who help with the chairs?

This is my final Chairman's message. It has been a great honour and pleasure to hold that position and what fun it has been to work with the team to find and devise new things to do.

I am delighted that Jane Crang is taking over from me; her unflappable presence and organisational skills for visits have been invaluable.

As always, I will end with a request for more helpers. The Society is what we make of it and new people with fresh ideas will allow us to expand what we do. Perhaps we have neglected an area of art or a topic that interests you? Would you (with our support) like to organise a Study Day? Do consider joining the team. It is such a satisfying and enjoyable thing to do.

Gill Grunwald

Gill Grunwald *Chairman*



SUBSCRIPTIONS AND MEMBERSHIP

Subscriptions for 2026 are £45 for single and £80 for joint membership.

Payments are due on 1 December each year for the FOLLOWING calendar year. Please email tasswl.treasurer@gmail.com if you decide not to renew your membership for 2027.

WE WELCOME NEW MEMBERS.

Details of how to join are on our website at www.theartsocietyswlondon.org.uk. Alternatively, email theartsocietyswlondon@gmail.com. (Reduced rates are available for those joining part way through a year.)

NB: INSURANCE DISCLAIMER

The Arts Society South West London cannot be held responsible for any personal accident, loss, damage or theft of members' personal property.

Members are covered against proven liability to third parties.

LECTURES

Venue: The Community Church, Werter Road, SW15 2LL and by Zoom.
At 8pm on the second Monday of each month (excluding April and August).

12 JANUARY

THE INFLUENCE OF UTILITY CLOTHING ON POST-WAR FASHIONS

Lecturer: Connie Gray



During WWII, with fabric rationed, Britain's Utility Clothing Scheme and CC41 label ensured clothes were practical, affordable, and long-lasting. Frills vanished, replaced by efficient, waste-minimising designs. Yet creativity endured. British couturiers Hardy Amies and Norman Hartnell brought elegance to austerity, pioneering well-cut, simple garments that paved the way for ready-to-wear fashion. In contrast, Christian Dior's 1947 New Look in France rejected wartime restraint and embraced post-war opulence with full skirts and cinched waists. This divide between British utility and French luxury shaped post-war fashion. The lecture examines how wartime necessity sparked innovation, proving that, even under restriction, fashion adapts and thrives.

Connie Gray is an authority on 20th-century fashion in art, with a focus on French haute couture. With a background in fashion and broadcasting, she works internationally as a curator, writer, lecturer, and advisor. She consults on museum exhibitions, acquisitions, and conservation, and promotes the cultural significance of fashion in visual art through her writing, talks, and collaborations with institutions and clients in the UK and USA.



9 FEBRUARY

THE ART OF STATE CEREMONIAL MUSIC

Lecturer: Graham Jones



The UK provides some of the biggest Ceremonial Events in the world and arguably the best in the world but why is that? How do the military prepare for major events such as the State Opening of Parliament, State Visits, The National Day of Remembrance, Royal Weddings or even a State Funeral?

Dr Graham Jones' professional life began as a musician in the British Army. After a career spanning nearly forty years he retired as the Senior Director of Music, Household Division and Director of Music, Coldstream Guards. He has recorded over 40 albums and pioneered a music education programme with the University of Salford for military musicians resulting in a new Master of Music in Performance degree. He now acts as a guest conductor, adjudicator, lecturer, recording consultant and educator. He was made an MBE in 1993.

9 MARCH

THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN ART IN 25 ICONIC WORKS

Lecturer: Marie-Anne Mancio

To celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in America, we will explore 25 iconic works including Grant Wood's 'American Gothic', Dorothea Lange's 'Migrant Mother', Hopper's 'Nighthawks', of American art. Trace the history of America through paintings, sculptures, land art, and photography that exemplify



vital moments in American history like the Gold Rush, the Civil War, Civil Rights movement, and so forth.

Dr. Marie-Anne Mancio trained as an artist before completing a DPhil (Sussex University). She has taught for Tate Modern, V&A, Dulwich Picture Gallery, HENI films, the Feminist Lecture Program, and nationally and internationally for The Arts Society. She is a Tour Director for ACE Cultural Tours and her own company, Hotel Alphabet, leading art tours globally, including to NYC. With an MPhil in Creative Writing, her text-based practice spans performances, prints, and installations. Co-Director of InFems art collective, she created an NFT for Carolina Herrera and co-curated Lost Girls featuring artists like Ai Weiwei and Maggi Hambling.



11 MAY

A RE-IMAGINED RENAISSANCE: THE VILLAS AND COLLECTIONS OF THE ANGLO-AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN THE LATE 19th CENTURY

Lecturer: Lydia Goodson



English and Americans flocked to Florence at the close of the nineteenth century and many stayed and bought properties. They shared a passionate interest in Italy, an interest perfectly parodied in E M Forster's social comedy 'A Room with a View', written in 1908, in which this ex-pat community is minutely examined. The fascination of this community with the Italian Renaissance was expressed through the extensive collections of Renaissance objects with which they decorated their Italian homes. In this lecture we will step inside some of their villas and gardens in Florence and the surrounding countryside to see how these Italophiles re-imagined the Renaissance for a new age.

Dr Lydia Goodson is a freelance art historian and lecturer. A specialist in the artistic production and the decorative art of early modern Italy, Lydia is an accredited Arts Society Lecturer, an Art History Tutor at CityLit, and a short course leader for The Warburg Institute.

8 JUNE

THE ART OF WAR IN PAINT AND PHOTOGRAPHY

Lecturer: Emma Watts

The official war artists scheme, started in WWI, served an educational and historical purpose, and was later a point of commemoration. These images present a witness account, explore the many different types of art and look at the merit of visual records as social commentary. They question what we memorialise. How do we see photography over paint? Does one offer more 'truth'? Do we see each medium differently? (Some images in this fully illustrated lecture may cause distress.)



Dr Emma Watts is an Art Historian with a special interest in British art, the economics of art, and material culture. She began in the world of fine art

auctions before a successful academic career in the UK, Australia and Hong Kong. Passionate about access to fine arts and its education, Emma developed various education curricula. She has been active in policy, planning, and advisory boards and curatorial and collection management in the UK and abroad. Emma currently juggles consultancy and fine art valuation with lecturing at the Open University and writing.

13 JULY

TAHITI – THE ENDURING IMAGE 1767–1920

Lecturer: Simon Keable-Elliott



The first European writers and artists who visited Tahiti in the 1760s came back talking about an island paradise. Writers such as Herman Melville, Robert Louis Stephenson, Pierre Loti and Somerset Maugham; and artists such as Charles Giraud, John La Farge and Paul Gauguin kept the image created by the artists who

accompanied Captain Cook – William Hodges and John Webber – going for 150 years; but what was it about Tahiti, the time it was ‘discovered’ and the popularity of certain writers and artists that made Tahiti so unique?

A graduate of Durham University, Simon was Head of Politics and Director of Model United Nations at Royal Russell School for 25 years. He now works as a writer, researcher, and lecturer. His first book ‘Utterly Immoral, Robert Keable and his scandalous novel’ was published in November 2022, and he had also written articles for many publications. He is a regular speaker at events run by The Arts Society, Western Front Associations, U3As and Family History Societies.



14 SEPTEMBER

FRENCH PAINTERS AND THE MOVE TOWARDS THE SUN

Lecturer: Juliet Heslewood



The Impressionists liberated a way forward for artists in the generations that came after them. Monet and Van Gogh, among others, left Paris for the Mediterranean. Painters became ‘Pointillists’ – their brushwork made up of tiny strokes of colour straight from the tube. Signac invited his friend Matisse to stay with him in St Tropez. Eventually, further along the coast, the startling paintings of the Fauves – wild beasts – gave birth to a new movement that astounded the early 20th century art world. This lecture will tie in well with the upcoming RA Exhibition ‘Painting the French Riviera’ from 2nd October 2026.

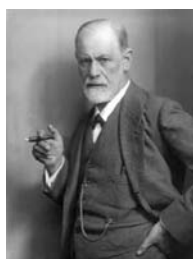
Juliet lived in France for 30 years where she devised and led Art Study Tours. Returned to England, she now concentrates on lecturing, frequently at the Ashmolean Museum. She has had many books published and was interviewed on the television programme ‘Art on the BBC’ to talk about Van Gogh. She now concentrates on her writing career.

12 OCTOBER

THE ECHOING SCREAM: THE BIRTH OF EXPRESSIONISM

Lecturer: Gavin Plumley

Edvard Munch created ‘The Scream’ in 1893 in response to an intense emotional experience. Crippling and anxiety-inducing, this primal cry was



a rallying call for Munch and for the wider world of art. It gave birth to a movement known as expressionism, showing life not as it is (realism) or as it might be perceived in a fleeting moment (impressionism), but as it is experienced within the unembellished core of our being. Charting the origins of expressionism and its historical context, this multifaceted talk embraces artists and thinkers such as Kandinsky, Klee and Schiele, Nietzsche, Freud and Schoenberg, pondering the radical ways in which they reflected and ignited our inner feelings.



A writer and broadcaster, Gavin Plumley appears on BBC Radio 3 and 4. He contributes to newspapers, magazines and opera & concert programmes worldwide and lectures widely about the culture of Central Europe. He has given talks at the Hay and Cheltenham Literature Festivals, the Royal Opera House, the National Gallery, the National Trust, the National Theatre, the British Museum and the V&A.

9 NOVEMBER

CAMILLE CLAUDEL: LOVING RODIN

Lecturer: Jacqueline Cockburn

Camille Claudel became Rodin’s pupil in the 1880s and, soon after, his lover, muse, assistant and trusted advisor. The stormy relationship lasted for at least a decade. This lecture will explore her work and her life and consider why she spent her last years in an asylum for the insane. A sculpture by Claudel was



recently uncovered in an abandoned Parisian apartment and sold in February 2025 for 3 million dollars. Camille Claudel has been rediscovered as a great artist in her own right despite loving Rodin.



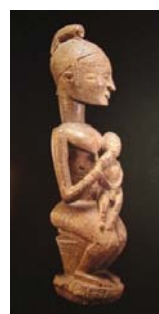
Jacqueline is an art historian and linguist. After an academic career teaching at Birkbeck College, University of London and Westminster School, she is now a freelance lecturer. She is course director and lecturer at the V&A and

lectures at The Royal Academy, The Arts Society and a number of private institutions. Jacqueline is Managing Director of Art and Culture Travel running courses in Andalucía, Southern Spain, Madrid, Barcelona, Tangiers, Venice and Paris. Her recent book on Goya was published by Prestel in 2025.

14 DECEMBER

AFRICAN ART: ART, CRAFT OR CURIO – AN INTRODUCTION TO AFRICAN SUB-SAHARAN ART

Lecturer: Nirvana Romell



As an introduction for beginners as well as food for thought for aficionados, this talk will investigate the links between Europe and Africa, and the ways in which African traditional art is viewed by Europeans. It will address the question of ‘How to look at African traditional art’. A thoughtful yet light-hearted ‘door opener’, it will showcase ways in which fascinating and beautiful artefacts are used for medicinal purposes and in communication & policing and marriage-counselling. The audience are invited to bring their own traditional African artefacts.

Born and raised in Croatia, Nirvana emigrated in the 1990s, after completing her MA at the University of Zagreb, in English language and literature, and History of Art. During a decade in South Africa, she fell in love with traditional African art and has studied it ever since. She has worked in the UK since 2003 as a lecturer, creating adult engagement programmes and training museum staff and volunteers in Manchester and Liverpool. She has also designed and led cultural tours for the Whitworth Art Gallery, Oxbridge Alumni and the Arts Society.



VISITS

A charge is made and prior booking is required.

In view of the larger number of Study Days, we have not listed any visits. They will be added during the year. Members will be kept up to date via the website and by email or letter.

THE FOLLOWING VISITS ARE ON OUR WISH LIST:

- A REPEAT VISIT TO THE SPEAKERS HOUSE (AT THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT)
- A GUIDED TOUR AT THE V&A

25 JUNE 2026

COOKHAM & THE STANLEY SPENCER GALLERY

All day coach trip

The 2026 Awayday will be a slightly unusual one. It will combine a visit to the village of Cookham and the Stanley Spencer Gallery with a lecture by Amy Lim entitled 'A Village in Heaven: Stanley Spencer's Cookham'. Amy is an Arts Society lecturer and Curator of the Stanley Spencer Gallery.



Few artists are as rooted in a place as Stanley Spencer and his beloved home village of Cookham. The Thames-side village was not only

his birthplace and home for most of his life, but it dominated his imagination and was the inspiration and location for many of his paintings. The lecture will look at Cookham's place in Spencer's art, and how it was central to his unique vision of English domestic and spiritual life.

On arrival in Cookham, there will be a lecture followed by a lunch break. The group will then be split into two so that each group has a chance to visit the gallery and to go on a guided tour around the village.



STUDY EVENTS

In recent years, our study events have been very well attended so we have arranged **THREE** for 2026. For all of them, prior booking is required and a charge is made. Please note the venue for each.

THURSDAY 29 JANUARY (9:45-14:45)

VENUE: The Community Church, Werter Road, Putney SW15 2LL

ANTIQUE JEWELLERY

Lecturer: John Benjamin

This study event has a slightly unusual format. It will be made up of two morning lectures (with a break for coffee) and with a final session after lunch to look at specific items of jewellery. Attendees are invited to bring items of their own for discussion.



- Jewellery from Elizabeth I to Victoria
- Jewellery in the 20th Century
- Afternoon 'Surgery' – An appraisal of items



John Benjamin is a former International Director of Jewellery at Philips, the auctioneers, Hon. Jewellery Advisor to The National Trust and often appears on the BBC's Antiques Roadshow.

WEDNESDAY, 22 APRIL (TIME TBC)

VENUE: Putney Arts Theatre, Ravenna Road, Putney SW15 6AW

LJUBLJANA AND TRIESTE

Lecturer: Gavin Plumley

Although this study event relates to the 2026 Tour to Ljubljana, all members are welcome to attend.

There will be two lectures with a break for refreshments. The first lecture will look at Slovenia, its history and its art, and the second will look at Trieste: a city (currently part of Italy) that lies at the intersection of Latin, Slavic and Germanic cultures.

- Ljubljana and Slovene Singularity
- Trieste – History & Culture

Gavin Plumley is a very experienced writer and broadcaster on BBC Radios 3 & 4. He will also be our lecturer in October.



THURSDAY 5 NOVEMBER (10:00-14:30)

VENUE: Putney Arts Theatre, Ravenna Road, Putney SW15 6AW

THE RISE AND FALL OF NAPOLEON AND JOSEPHINE

Lecturer: Stephen Duffy

This will be a three lecture study event with breaks for refreshments and time for lunch. The three talks, all illustrated with many wonderful works of art, should have something for everyone – politics, war, art, fashion and gardening.

- Napoleon's Rise to Power
- The 'Incomparable' Empress Josephine
- Napoleon: From the Coronation to Exile

Stephen Duffy is an experienced Arts Society lecturer and was formerly Senior Curator and a guide at the Wallace Collection.



AWAY TOUR

SUNDAY 17 - FRIDAY 22 MAY 2026

TOUR TO LJUBLJANA



This 6 day / 5 night trip (arranged by Travel Editions) will use BA flights from Heathrow to Ljubljana with accommodation at the UHotel in the city centre. Two of the days will involve

guided tours around the city centre taking in the Art Nouveau architecture that characterises the city and visits to some of the museums and galleries. On the final day there will be a visit to the Arboretum.

There will also be two full-day excursions by coach; one to Lake Bled in the heart of the Slovenian countryside and the other across the Italian border to Trieste; a city with equally stunning architecture and history.

Only Waiting List places are available.



Photo © credits. **Page 1:** (G Grunwald unless stated): Apsley House tour – The Waterloo Gallery, Duke of Wellington's ceremonial uniforms, Freemason's Hall stairwell and exterior, Art Exhibition at the Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability, Chelsea Physic Garden visit (H Mathieson), Richard III's embroidered funeral pall, Hatfield Old Palace, Elizabeth I Rainbow Portrait at Hatfield House. **Page 2:** (courtesy of the lecturers unless stated): Fashion in a Time of War (Imperial War Museum), CC41 Utility pyjamas 1943 (Imperial War Museum), Guildford Guards Band (Colin Smith Wikimedia CC SA 2.0), Trooping the Colour (G Grunwald), Watson and the Shark (JS Copley), The Copley Family, Villa La Pietra, Il Sogno e la Gloria (Stibbert Museum), Preparing to Advance (1939), Preparing to Advance (WJ Atwood 1918). **Page 3:** (courtesy of the lecturers unless stated): Bay of Oaite Peha, Otaheite (W Hodges) (from Wikimedia Commons), Portrait of Omai (J Reynolds) (from Wikimedia Commons), Mont Sainte-Victoire with large Pine (P Cezanne), Open Window (H Matisse), Sigmund Freud (Max Halberstadt) (detail), The Scream (E Munch, 1893), L'Age Mur 1895 (Claudel), Bust of Rodin 1888-9 (Claudel), Dogon Mother, Bamileke Royal Festival Mask, Benin Leopard. **Page 4:** View from Cookham Bridge (Stanley Spencer) and Boatman detail from Christ Preaching (Stanley Spencer) (both courtesy of Amy Lim), Napoleonic ring and Victorian brooch (Photo Walton) (courtesy of John C Benjamin), Rakers (Ivan Grohar) (detail) and 1898 Vienna-Trieste Travel poster (both courtesy of Gavin Plumley), Emperor Napoleon in his Study (J-L David) and Empress Josephine (Ferdinand Quaglia) (detail) (both courtesy of Stephen Duffy), Ljubljana Castle/Ljubljana Dragon Bridge/Lake Bled/Trieste/Volci Potok Arboretum, Ljubljana (all courtesy of Travel Editions).