



We are an arts appreciation society. Our monthly lectures, from accredited public speakers, cover a wide variety of arts-related topics. This year our illustrated talks cover not only painting (Bruegel, Seurat and Craxton) but also sculpture, literature, Venetian luxury, theatre and ancient civilisations.

Our lectures are at 7.45 pm, once a month on a Monday evening, at King's Academy, Wood Lane, Binfield RG42 4EX. Tea and coffee are available from 7.15pm and we aim to finish by 9pm. Our talks are also live-streamed to our YouTube channel, so you can watch from the comfort of your home, if you are unable to join us in person.

We welcome guests and new members.

Please email: MemSecTheArtsSocietyWham@gmail.com to find out more.

Full details of the season's programme are available on our website:
www.TheArtsSocietyWokingham.org.uk

Checkout our Facebook page for news and local arts recommendations.

Sponsorship

We are delighted that local solicitors, Clifton Ingram, will be sponsoring us again this year.



Exclusive Visits and Study Days

As well as monthly lectures, we also hold **Study Days** at Wokingham Theatre, which explore a topic in more depth and are an opportunity to make new friends. Next season's Study Days include 'Kyoto - The Sacred Heart of Japan' and 'Beyond the Bonnets - a celebration of the life of Jane Austen'.

The Society also organises a programme of **Group Visits** to a wide variety of places of historic and artistic interest.

Charitable Giving

We have ongoing relationships with local schools **St Crispin's** and **Maiden Erlegh**. Our financial support enables them to develop their pupils' creative skills and offer them a wider range of artistic experiences.

Get Involved

We are a volunteer-led, charitable society, with many enjoyable opportunities for members to play a more active role. We always welcome new committee members, as current ones finish their term of office. We have a great team who would welcome you as a member.

Even if you only have a limited amount of time to spare but would still like to get involved, please get in touch to find out about opportunities to help.

email: ChairTheArtsSocietyWham@gmail.com
www.TheArtsSocietyWokingham.org.uk



Landscape with Poet and Bird Catcher (detail)
© estate of John Craxton. All rights reserved.

September 15th 2025

JOHN CRAXTON: His Life, Art and Times

Lecturer: *Jo Walton*

An exploration of the life and work of this highly individual painter, whose paintings and theatre designs combined modernity with the great British landscape tradition.

Born in 1922, John Craxton discovered the visionary works of 19th century artists William Blake and Samuel Palmer; their poetic imagining of Britain and her landscape fired his own creativity.

As a young artist, he shared studio space with Lucien Freud and was mentored by artists such as Graham Sutherland, before living and working in Greece and creating a personal, colourful and poetic artistic world.

Jo Walton has combined teaching and lecturing with a career in art bookselling 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.

October 20th 2025

THE MAYAN CIVILISATION

Lecturer: *Dr. Duncan Pring*

The Maya lived in Central America between 1000 BC and 1528 AD, up to the Spanish conquest.

At their peak (300 - 900 AD), they built enormous monuments, produced jade and ceramic items of great beauty and developed a calendar that was far more advanced than anything in Europe at the time.

With their advanced understanding of mathematics and astronomy, they developed a hieroglyphic script which scholars are beginning to decipher, allowing us to better understand their achievements.



Maya relief panel from Tonina, Chiapas
Image © Robin Cops

Dr Duncan Pring was educated at Oxford (BA, MA) and London (MA, PhD). His PhD thesis was on 'The Preclassic Ceramics of Northern Belize'. He has published many subsequent articles, mainly on Mayan ceramics. He is currently involved with other North American archaeologists, pulling together different ceramic sequences in Belize.

November 17th 2025

THE ART OF VISUAL DECEPTION: Now you see it, now you don't

Lecturer: Bertie Pearce

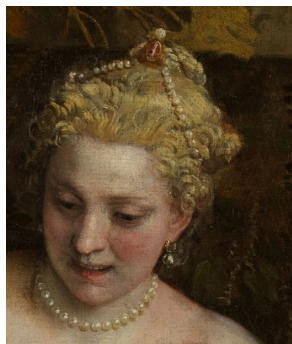
This is one of the quirkiest lectures you will ever hear. There is a universal delight in being deceived. This lecture takes us on a whistle-stop tour of art which fools, surprises and amuses the viewer.

Beginning and ending with the Belgian surrealist René Magritte, it encompasses Trompe-l'oeil, Banksy, Bridget Riley, Arcimboldo and Escher to name but a few. Hold on to your seats and get ready to be visually fried!



Vertumnus, Giuseppe Arcimboldo
Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons

Bertie Pearce has a BA (Hons) in Drama from Manchester University, and a Diploma Internationale from the École Internationale du Théâtre. He is a member of the Inner Magic Circle, with Gold Star. He has lectured and performed on cruise ships, and to historical societies, festivals and colleges. In addition, he has toured the world with a magic cabaret show and a one-man show entitled 'All Aboard'.



Mars and Venus united by love (detail), Paolo Veronese
Public Domain via Metropolitan Museum of Art

January 19th 2026

SUMPTUOUS VERONESE: The depiction of luxury goods in 16th century Venice

Lecturer: Chantal Brotherton-Ratcliffe

Venice was the European port through which all the glamorous and luxurious products of India, the Middle East and the Far East passed, and she made sure that the best pieces remained in Venice.

Indian jewellery, silks and porcelains shone in the paintings produced by Venetian artists in the 15th and 16th centuries - Bellini, Titian, Tintoretto and Veronese. But of these, it is Veronese who delighted most in depicting the textures and colours of luxury goods.

With 40 years' experience as a lecturer, Chantal has taught at Sotheby's Institute of Art on the MA in Fine and Decorative Arts since 1989, and lectures for societies and institutions, including the National Gallery and the Wallace Collection. Having trained as a conservator, she brings an understanding of making and painting to her lectures.



Bathers at Asnières (detail), Georges Seurat
© Creative Commons via The National Gallery, London

February 23rd 2026

THE ANATOMY OF A MASTERPIECE: Bathers at Asnières by Georges Seurat

Lecturer: Steven Barrett

Bathers at Asnières (1884) is one of the best-loved pictures in any British collection. Painted by the Post-Impressionist artist Georges Seurat, then only 24 and brimming with ambition, it is an impressive, light-filled canvas showing Parisians at leisure by the river Seine.

Seurat's bold new ideas capture the shimmering effects of sunlight on water, grass and in the air itself.

This lecture looks at the painting in detail, explores Seurat's vision and his contribution to the history of modern art.

Steven Barrett has a BA in Fine Art, Liverpool School of Art and an MA in History of Art, Birkbeck College, London. A lecturer at the National Gallery since 2004 and at Somerset House, he also taught at London colleges. He is a regular museum guide for U3A. Steven is also a painter.

March 16th 2026

APHRA BEHN: Agent 160 and the First Woman of British Theatre

Lecturer: Giles Ramsay

"All women together ought to let flowers fall on the tomb of Aphra Behn ... for it was she who earned them the right to speak their minds."
Virginia Woolf

Following a successful career as one of Charles II's spies in Europe and South America, Aphra Behn returned to England and shattered the glass ceiling of London's Restoration Theatre by becoming one of the most successful playwrights of the age.



Aphra Behn, Peter Lely, Yale Center for British Art
Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons

Giles Ramsay is an independent theatre director and producer who creates new work with artists in developing countries. He is a course leader in Theatre at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Giles has run theatre projects all over the world and given talks for institutions ranging from The Foundation for Mexican Literature, to the Royal College of Physicians. Giles combines academic analysis with hands on experience to bring a unique insight to the world of the theatre.

April 20th 2026

A CELEBRATION OF NATURE: Antoni Gaudi and other Catalan Architects

Lecturer: Jacqueline Cockburn

This lecture explores Gaudi's work in detail. It shows how he engaged with nature in the most innovative ways.

Inspired by natural objects and animals, he worked with extraordinary ceramicists, iron workers, tilers and decorative artists.

We look at his public and private buildings and his relationship with a wealthy and demanding patron. Private, shy and retiring, he was also humorous and witty in his extravagant style.



Saint George and the Dragon at Casa Amatller, Barcelona
sculptor: Eusebi Arnau © Jacqueline Cockburn

Jacqueline Cockburn is Managing Director of Art and Culture Travel, running residential courses in Andalucia, Southern Spain on the art and culture of the region, as well as curated tours to Madrid, Tangiers, Barcelona, Paris and Venice. Jacqueline is a course director and lecturer at the V&A and also lectures at The Royal Academy.

May 18th 2026

WHO WAS BRUEGEL? Discovering the Master through his Sons

Lecturer: Dr Amy Orrock



The Wedding Dance, Pieter Bruegel the Elder
Detroit Institute of Arts
Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons

Pieter Bruegel the Elder was an undisputed master; his small body of surviving paintings demonstrate his supreme ability to depict the daily life of peasants with both humour and humility. This lecture will introduce Bruegel as a distinctive artistic voice in the 16th century and consider the ways in which his revolutionary images were transformed, reproduced and popularised after his death by his two sons and greatest followers, Pieter Brueghel the Younger and Jan Brueghel the Elder.

Dr Amy Orrock is a curator and art historian. She has published and lectured widely on Northern European art and has curated many exhibitions, including 'Rubens & Women' (Dulwich Picture Gallery, 2023), 'Cranach: Artist & Innovator' (Compton Verney, 2020) and 'Bruegel: Defining a Dynasty' (The Holburne Museum, 2017). She is currently a National Curator for the National Trust.

June 15th 2026

THE ELGIN MARBLES: A History of Meaning

Lecturer: Alan Read



Elgin Parthenon Marbles, The British Museum, London
© Dominic's pics, CC BY 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons

In the two centuries since they were removed from the Parthenon by Lord Elgin, the meaning and significance of the 'Elgin marbles' has changed dramatically.

From architectural decoration to disputed cultural objects, this lecture looks at the response to them over their time in Britain, from the original controversy over their purchase to the current debate surrounding the restitution of the marbles to the new Acropolis Museum in Athens.

Alan has a masters and first-class honours degree in History of Art from Birkbeck College, University of London. He is a gallery guide at Tate Britain and regularly lectures at both London Tates. For twenty years he was a gallery guide and lecturer at the National Portrait Gallery and the Dulwich Picture Gallery. He also works as a London Blue Badge Guide.

July 20th 2026

CHARLES DICKENS: Man of the Theatre

Lecturer: Simon Whitehouse

Discover the core of Charles Dickens' character in this enlightening and entertaining lecture. From his debut as a seven year old, reciting a poem sitting on a pub table, Dickens developed a lifelong passion for the theatre.

As a young man, he attended the theatre every night for three years, created over 2,000 intensely theatrical characters and produced, directed, and starred in lavish productions staged in purpose-built theatre spaces in the family home. First night audiences included Queen Victoria and The Duke of Wellington!



Charles Dickens, Jeremiah Gurney
Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons

Simon Whitehouse is a (recovering) actor, lecturer, presenter, 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. He lectures for the Blue Badge Guide training course, on the performing arts and English literature. Simon's passions are theatre, literature, fashion and art history.



Lecture Programme 2025 - 2026

2025	
15 th Sept	The Life and Times of John Craxton
20 th Oct	The Mayan Civilisation
17 th Nov	The Art of Visual Deception
2026	
19 th Jan	Veronese's portrayal of luxury in 16 th century Venice
23 rd Feb	Bathers at Asnières by George Seurat
16 th March	Aphra Behn, Spy & First Woman of British Theatre
20 th April	Antoni Gaudi and other Catalan Architects
18 th May	Who was Bruegel?
15 th June	The Elgin Marbles
20 th July	Charles Dickens: Man of the Theatre

*Lectures are monthly, on a **Monday** evening
at 7.45pm
online and at:*

King's Academy
Wood Lane
Binfield, RG42 4EX



Check our website for the latest news

www.TheArtsSocietyWokingham.org.uk
Registered Charity no. 1207877



Find us on 