

AI WEIWEI

Activism, fear
and a remarkable
collecting habit



On our cover:
Portrait of a
dissident, the artist
Ai Weiwei

WELCOME

THE ARTS SOCIETY *Enriching lives through the arts*

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Despite the challenges, there's a tangible sense of energy (against the odds and cuts) in the arts right now. Delayed by the pandemic, we have a flurry of openings, here in the UK and further afield. In Bengaluru in India, the Museum of Art & Photography (MAP) opens this month, showing its collection of 60,000 works for the first time. Charleston in South Carolina will see the International African American Museum open its doors in the first half of the year. In the UK, Edinburgh's ambitious transformation of the Scottish National Gallery is planned to go on show this summer. London's National Portrait Gallery reopens in June post a multimillion-pound renovation; and a smaller, more intimate but equally compelling site in the capital also reopens after a £3m project.

Handel & Hendrix in London, in Brook Street, was home to two giants of music history: George Frideric Handel (at number 25) and Jimi Hendrix (number 23). Explore the site's new offerings from May.

Among the spring exhibitions to catch will be Ai Weiwei's major new show at The Design Museum. One of the most influential artists of our time, with activism as a constant, we ask Weiwei, among other things, for his views on current protest, such as the work of Just Stop Oil. Find his answers in our interview inside. One

of the highlights of spring, too, will of course be the coronation of Charles III. What better opportunity, we thought, to look back to the canny, innovative art collecting of his forebears, Charles I and II, and muse on what is to come in this new Carolean age. We've also dived into the tale of one of the globe's most unique patterns – tartan – and, finally, we explore the story behind one of the art world's most mysterious figures. The work of Swedish artist Hilma af Klint lay in the shadows for the longest time. This year we're invited to discover why that is no longer so.

SUE HERDMAN EDITOR



A sketch of the front elevation of Handel & Hendrix in London



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JOE HUMPHREYS/TATE PHOTOGRAPHY

IN FOCUS

PROCEEDING...

Here is a gathering unlike any you might have seen before. Entitled *The Procession*, by artist Hew Locke, it is the artist's vision of the procession as part of the cycle of life. Locke explores how we gather to

worship or protest, mourn or celebrate. He invites viewers to 'reflect on the cycles of history, and the ebb and flow of cultures, people, finance and power'. Look out, too, for messages on the historical legacy of the sugar trade, and allusions to both carnival and climate issues. Walk

alongside us, say Locke's fantastical figures, 'into an enlarged vision of an imagined future'. Originally presented at Tate Britain, this spring you can view this extraordinary installation at Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art in Gateshead until 11 June. For more, see baltic.art

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MARIJE JANSEN
Marije is curator of Japanese prints at the Rijksmuseum, which recently received a bequest of precious 20th-century Japanese prints. Inside she shares the story behind a particularly striking one



GRANT GIBSON
Grant, a design, architecture and craft writer, is host of the acclaimed podcast *Material Matters with Grant Gibson*. Inside he interviews one of the most fascinating artists of our times, Ai Weiwei



DR ALLISON GOUDIE
Allison, curator of art (pre-1800) at Royal Museums Greenwich, is working on the new exhibition *The Van de Veldes: Greenwich, Art and the Sea*. Who were the Van de Veldes? Find out inside

© NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM, LONDON

5
THINGS
TO DO THIS
SPRING

From portraits of pooches to a landmark arts opening, here is a taster of this season's highlights

1 CATCH A NEW RELEASE

Exhibition on Screen brings art films to cinemas across the world. This spring it marks International Women's Day on 8 March with the release of *Mary Cassatt: Painting the Modern Woman*. Born in America in 1844 and classically trained as an artist, Cassatt settled in Paris in 1874 and became a member of the Impressionists. A great graphic artist and painter, Cassatt centred her career on painting the lives of the women around her. Seen here is her 1878 oil *The Reader (Lydia Cassatt)*, a tender portrait of her sister. Through interviews with expert scholars and curators (all female), this film explores this often overlooked artist's life, lived at a time of huge cultural and societal change. exhibitiononscreen.com/films/mary-cassatt



BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

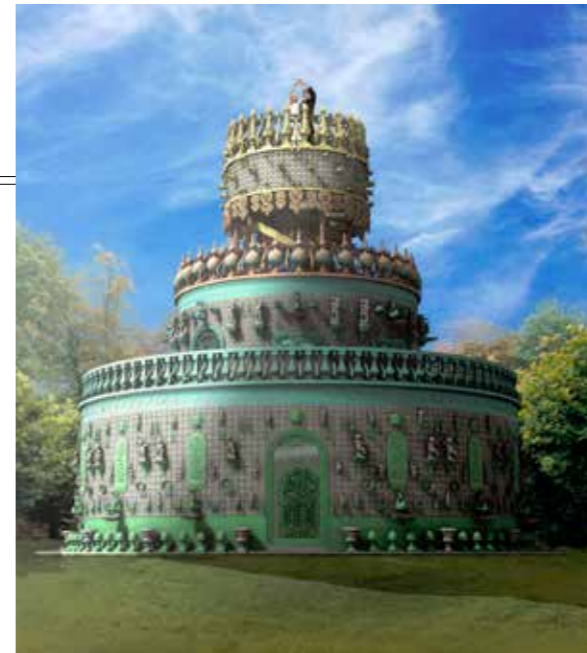
2 SEE SOMETHING MONUMENTAL

Opening on 4 April, catch a new exhibition, staged in the soaring surrounds of Coventry Cathedral. *This Fragile Earth* - featuring Scottish artists who anticipated climate crisis - runs until the end of May. The show comes from the Fleming Collection of Scottish art and focuses on veteran artists who were ahead of their time in responding to the threats to the beauty and fragility of our planet. A highlight will be this work, a recent bequest to the collection. Called *Arctic Mural* (1995), by James Morrison (1932-2020), it measures 6m across and is over 2.5m high. For more on the collection, see flemingcollection.com. coventrycathedral.org.uk

THE FLEMING COLLECTION © THE ARTIST'S ESTATE

3 STEP INSIDE A CAKE

When we interviewed Portuguese artist Joana Vasconcelos for our winter 2021 issue, she was working on a super-scale artwork, which is about to be revealed. Set in the grounds of Waddesdon Manor in Buckinghamshire, it is a 12m-high pavilion in the form of a three-tiered wedding cake. Almost five years in the making and clad in glossy pink, green and blue ceramic tiles, it is part sculpture, part garden folly. Inspired by Baroque architecture and the decorative ceramic traditions of Lisbon, *Wedding Cake* is, says the artist, 'a temple to love'. Seen here is the work in development; for the real thing, watch the website for the announcement of its opening, planned for April. waddesdon.org.uk



© ATELIER JOANA VASCONCELOS

4 HEAD TO MANCHESTER

Here are two great reasons to be beating a path to the north-west. Manchester Museum has just reopened following a £15m transformation (manchester.ac.uk/museum). See never-before-displayed collections, new galleries and fresh tellings of the story of Manchester that don't shy from tales of empire and colonialism. Hotly anticipated, too, is the forthcoming June opening of the new landmark cultural space Factory International. Designed by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture practice and operated by Manchester International Festival, this riverside centre for arts, music and culture will have a year-round programme by global artists and some 80 annual music performances. Book early for Yayoi Kusama's largest-ever immersive environment, *You, Me and the Balloons* (30 June-28 August). factoryinternational.org



OMA



© DAVID HOCKNEY/PHOTO: RICHARD SCHMIDT COLLECTION/ THE DAVID HOCKNEY FOUNDATION

5 EXPLORE A JOYFUL BOND

From setters to spaniels, our devotion to dogs is not only well charted in literature; artists, too, have long captured hounds in 2D and 3D art form. This spring London's The Wallace Collection celebrates such works in *Portraits of Dogs: From Gainsborough to Hockney* (29 March-15 October). Seen here is the latter's endearing *Dog Painting 30* (1995), one of 40 works the artist painted of his dachshunds, Stanley and Boogie. 'They're like little people to me,' Hockney noted. Expect over 59 stellar works. Among them will be sleek marble greyhounds by an unknown Roman artist, exquisite drawings by Leonardo da Vinci, foxhounds by George Stubbs, and Edwin Landseer's first royal commission, an 1836 portrait of Queen Victoria's favourite dog, Dash. wallacecollection.org



See our in-depth listings from [page 44](#) For our top arts events each month, sign up to theartsociety.org/signup

SPOTLIGHT ON THE ARTS

OUR EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS AND FEATURES DRAWN FROM ACROSS THE ARTS WORLD



MAGDALENA ABAKANOWICZ / © FUNDACJA MARTY MAGDALENY ABAKANOWICZ KOSMOWSKIEJ I JANA KOSMOWSKIEGO, WARSZAWA

DON'T MISS...

...Magdalena Abakanowicz: *Every Tangle of Thread and Rope* - a rare chance to see the extraordinary body of work known as the *Abakans* by the Polish-born artist (1930-2027). These complex, towering and ambiguous forms broke new ground in the arts world in the 1960s and 70s. Made from materials such as sisal, hemp and horsehair, they also led the way for other artists working with fibre. See them now at Tate Modern, London. Until 21 May; [tate.org.uk](https://www.tate.org.uk)

Fine lines

What's the story behind this beautiful print? Curator *Marije Jansen* examines its making

This Japanese woodblock, called *Pencilling her Eyebrows*, is part of a bequest to the Rijksmuseum, through the Für Elise Foundation, from the collection of Elise Wessels.

Woodblock prints had been in demand in Japan until the mid-19th century, when, due to new techniques, such as lithography, and a rising interest in photography, they became less

popular. At the start of the 20th century, publisher Watanabe Shōzaburō revived interest in them, bringing together talented painters, cutters and printers to create technically perfect prints, which he named *shin hanga* (new prints). In 1916, Watanabe recruited Itō Shinsui, a renowned painter, who became one of the leading *shin hanga* artists. This 1928 print is one of his most iconic designs.

5. COMPOSITION

Shinsui chose a vertical format for this print, which was uncommon for woodblock printed portraits. He uses it effectively to create a three-sided composition. Look closely and you will see how the figure's back gives the right side to the 'triangle'. The left side starts with the red powder brush hanging from the black and gold lacquered mirror stand, and runs via the eyebrow pencil towards the top of the woman's head.

1. BLACK OUTLINE

Shin hanga prints were made in the same way as Japanese woodblock prints from previous centuries. Based on the design made by a painter, wooden blocks were cut and printed. The first was the so-called line block. This was usually printed in black, creating the hallmark thin, black contour line, framing the colours in finished prints. See how Shinsui cleverly uses the line block in this print to make the woman's red lips stand out from the red background.

2. INDEPENDENT WOMEN

From the 17th century the chief subjects in Japanese woodblock prints had been warriors, male actors, landscapes and the so-called 'pictures of beautiful women' (*bijin-ga*), usually depicting famous geishas. By portraying an actress, possibly Mizutani Yaeko (1905–79), Shinsui connects the old world of idealised beauty with the new reality of the 20th century, which gave women more working opportunities to become economically independent.

3. DIFFERING STYLES

The 20th century saw two new styles emerge in woodblock printing. We've mentioned *shin hanga* artists, who, like Shinsui, worked with a publisher and cutters and printers to create technically perfect works. *Sōsaku hanga* (creative print) artists believed they could only express their creativity by cutting and printing their own blocks, which resulted in more spontaneous, less polished works.

4. THE COLOUR RED

The deep-red background was created by inking and printing the block several times. This required the utmost skill, because each overprinting increased the chance for the red colour to bleed outside the black contour lines, into the unprinted area of the woman's skin. A soft, diluted red was used above the eyes, on the upper part of the ear and on the fingertips, to bring the skin alive.

SEE

The Elise Wessels Collection Exhibition of modern Japanese prints collected by Elise Wessels. Until 16 April, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; rijksmuseum.nl



Right: *The Departure of William of Orange and Princess Mary for Holland, November 1677* by Willem van de Velde the Younger

BECOME AN INSTANT EXPERT ON THE VAN DE VELDES

This father and son artist duo founded a key genre in British painting. So why don't we know more about them? Curator Dr Allison Goudie shares their story

Who were the Van de Veldes?

Willem van de Velde the Elder (below right) and his son, Willem the Younger (below left), were the leading marine painters of 17th-century Europe. They had a thriving studio business in Amsterdam in the 1650s and 1660s, with an international clientele. In the winter of 1672-73 they emigrated to England, amid the fallout of the so-called 'Disaster Year', when Amsterdam was effectively besieged by the French and the English, causing the economy – and art market – to collapse. In a bid to boost local industries, King Charles II issued an open invitation to Dutch citizens to relocate to England. It is unclear whether the Van de Veldes' move was in response to this general invitation, or if there was a more specific one from the royal family. Either way, Charles incentivised them to stay, paying them each an annual salary of £100 and giving them space in the Queen's House at Greenwich for their studio.

Why are they important in the history of art?

While the name 'Van de Velde' no longer enjoys the fame it once did, the Van de Veldes are literally a household name in the sense that their impact is still felt in many a British interior. This is because the duo established the



taste for marine painting among the British. Most seascapes or paintings of ships we encounter in domestic and institutional interiors today are in one way or another indebted to their work.

Who did they inspire?

The Van de Veldes inspired generations of British painters who came after them. Only with JMW Turner did British marine painting step out from their shadow. Even Turner, however, measured himself against the Van de Veldes, creating work that engaged actively with the precedent they set. He proudly owned drawings by them and is said to have claimed that the Van de Veldes' work 'made me a painter'.

What did they create – and how?

The Van de Veldes' fame – and the claim to authenticity for which their work was prized – had much to do with the Elder's practice of sailing out with the Dutch fleet to witness and record sea battles first-hand. Rough sketches created out on the waves were later worked up into exquisite drawings teeming with detail. These in turn formed a vast catalogue of subjects that were used to create finished works. Van de Velde the Younger excelled in colour



paintings in oil, exploring the effects of light on the watery world, while his father specialised in 'pen paintings', highly detailed monochrome pictures drawn in ink on canvas or panel supports.

What lesser-known facts exist about them?

The Van de Veldes were among the most prolific draughtsmen of the 17th century. Their archive of drawings – covering intricate ship portraits, rapid compositional sketches and even instructional drawings for assistants – would have been their most valuable studio asset, providing the basis for endless paintings. More than 2,500 drawings by them are preserved in public collections today. We are lucky at Royal Museums Greenwich to have some 1,400 in our collection. Few collections can tell us as much about how a 17th-century artist's studio functioned – marine artists or otherwise.

SEE

The Van de Veldes: Greenwich, Art and the Sea; 2 March 2023-14 January 2024; The Queen's House, Greenwich; rmg.co.uk/van-de-velde



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Weiwei's next stand

As Ai Weiwei prepares for his new London show, *Grant Gibson* quizzes him on his collecting habit, his views on fear, and what he really thinks about current-day activists



What exactly is Ai Weiwei doing at London's Design Museum? He's worked in a panoply of media – from ceramic and glass to film and digital – but he's an artist, not a designer, surely? The obvious answer is to point to his architectural projects. They've included the design of his own studio, as well as working with Swiss practice Herzog & de Meuron on the 'Bird's Nest' National Stadium for the Beijing Summer Olympics in 2008. But there again, his new Design Museum show, *Making Sense*, isn't really concerned with that either. 'We're not presenting Weiwei as a designer,' confirms the show's curator (and the museum's chief curator), Justin McGuirk.

'He's been an architect many times, but we're not presenting him as an architect either. We're using his work as a lens on design culture in a broad sense, and I'm using that to encompass making, craftsmanship and man-made objects.' Answering questions through email, the artist himself is even less equivocal. 'The Design Museum is a museum that is strongly thematic, and design is a theme that I have always been concerned with. It was a natural choice.'

Quibbles about the venue out of the way, Weiwei, who currently lives in Portugal, is keen to make clear that design has long played a vital role in his practice. 'My work is about redefining, using a fresh form to complete an expression. It can be achieved through different materials: installations, images, photos, videos, or through languages, like written texts, conversations and interviews. Doing it anew in a museum that is dedicated to the theme of "design" corresponds to the attributes of my work. »



Above: *Illumination*, a mirror 'selfie', taken in police presence, created here in toy bricks, 2019
Right: an early work, *Violin Shoe*, 1985

© RICK PUSHINSKY FOR THE DESIGN MUSEUM

GEORGE DARRELL/© AI WEIWEI STUDIO

REINER RIEDLER/© AI WEIWEI STUDIO



TAIPEI FINE ARTS MUSEUM, 2011



NATIONAL GALLERY PRAGUE, 2017

Whatever I do, there is always a new definition with a new form – this is what I often consider as an element of design.'

ARCH COLLECTOR

Weiwei's exhibition focuses on a series of recent works, entitled *Fields*, based around his extraordinary collecting habit. Items range from historical artefacts, such as 20,000 Neolithic tools and porcelain cannonballs dating back to the Song Dynasty, to more contemporary objects (think toy bricks). Weiwei describes his collecting as 'a learning process', adding that he's concerned with 'learning what happened in history, why it happened, what was produced at that time and under what kind of conditions; what were the customs and political changes of that time'. There's also a sense that he's keen to preserve the last remnants of China's craft skills, providing them with context and placing them in a continuum with contemporary making techniques. 'I think there's a late blossoming appreciation of history and craftsmanship from Stone Age tools to plastic, injection-moulded, mass-produced bricks,' confirms McGuirk. The artist (perhaps as you'd expect) uses rather more opaque language, telling me: 'We are only part of history; future is only part of present.'

At the root of all this is the importance of skill. According to Weiwei, craftsmanship 'is the creative activity itself, and the language and vocabulary of creativity. Without that language and vocabulary, no creative activities can exist.' So, I wonder, how do his collections inform his work? 'My collecting is part of my work and cannot be dissociated from other artworks of mine. Collecting is not only a phenomenon but rather an understanding of history and human behaviour.' He chooses objects and materials based on the meaning they have

Top: Weiwei's *Law of the Journey* installation, about the plight of refugees
Above: *Forever Bicycles*, with multiple messages, including those on China's past

'CHINA IS NOT IN DANGER OF LOSING ITS HISTORY OF CRAFTSMANSHIP, BUT IS IN THE AFTERMATH OF IT ALREADY... [IT] HAS THOROUGHLY DESTROYED PREVIOUS CRAFTSMANSHIP'



PETER MACDIARMID/GETTY IMAGES

Above: *Sunflower Seeds* at Tate Modern, 2010; this installation of 100 million handprinted 'seeds' was instrumental in making the artist widely known in Britain; Below: the everyday made extraordinary, *Marble Takeout Container*, 2015

to his own life and work. The array of spouts that were broken off teapots and thrown away 1,000 years ago during the Song dynasty, or the porcelain balls he has amassed, are imbued with 'cultural, historical and political information and are related to my long-term interests and research on issues that I have experienced. It's not that I chose these materials – instead, we discovered one another.'

Other sections of his upcoming exhibition relate directly to these interests. His Duchamp-inspired *Ordinary Objects* transforms humdrum products – such as a toilet roll and a takeout box – into works of art, using materials much as marble and glass, true craftsmanship and, subsequently, introducing them to the art world as sculpture. Meanwhile, a section entitled *Construction/Destruction* looks at the changing face of cities through

ERIC GREGORY POWELL/© AI WEIWEI STUDIO

mediums such as photography and film. It speaks to China's relationship with its own traditions. As the artist points out: 'China is not in danger of losing its history of craftsmanship, but is in the aftermath of it already. With the so-called revolutions and changes throughout this century, China



has thoroughly destroyed previous craftsmanship. In addition to the way of production in craftsmanship, a kind of culture, ethics, order and language is also destroyed. When this is all destroyed, we as human beings have nothing left.' China isn't alone in this, of course, and Weiwei refuses to let other parts of the globe off the hook. 'After the Industrial Revolution, people's ability to work with hands decreased in the West, which led to the limitation of thinking and lack of search for meanings when facing challenges.'

CRITICAL EYE

With this interest in tradition and making, it's intriguing to discover what Weiwei thinks of some of the art world's recent innovations. You sense he's not a fan of non-fungible tokens, for instance. 'The art world is drifting away more and more >>

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Left to right: *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn*, 1995

Below: a still from the artist's 2013 protest music video, *Dumbass*, made in a recreation of the prison cell in which he was detained for 81 days by the Chinese state

from the meanings of art and culture,' he explains. 'What we should do is reconfirm the meanings of art and culture and redefine life according to the human condition. This kind of art is very rare nowadays. What we see today is just fashionable cultural and political tendency, like a kind of bubble.'

Activism has always played a vital role in his life and practice. In 1995, he famously smashed a Han Dynasty vase to illustrate how the Chinese government was destroying the nation's heritage and, therefore, sense of itself. Arguably most controversial were his actions in response to a 2008 earthquake in Sichuan. His blog,

titled *Citizens' Investigation*, compiled names and information of schoolchildren who had perished – information that the government was attempting to suppress. Two years later, the authorities destroyed Weiwei's studio in Shanghai and, later that year, he was arrested and jailed for almost three months. Another studio – this time in Beijing – was destroyed in 2018. It comes as no surprise when Weiwei tells me: 'Activism is the definition of life. No activism, no life.' That being the case, what are his thoughts on Just Stop Oil protestors using art to generate publicity by throwing soup at Van Gogh's glass-encased *Sunflowers*? His answer is coolly

enigmatic. 'The so-called activism has been replaced by surface-level ideologies, without being able to be involved in more essential and more in-depth issues. In the same way that we cannot pull our own ear and kick ourselves off balance, most of what we see as activism is lacking the understanding of world history and fails to identify our real plight today; it is nothing more than the appearance of it.'

And then, of course, there's the West's deteriorating relationship with China as Xi Jinping's ambitions become increasingly expansionist. Should we fear the country's intentions? Weiwei's response is deeply humane (if perhaps not wholly realistic). 'We should not fear anyone because anyone, any country, any political group has its own thread of thoughts in its development,' he concludes. 'Fear itself is the most frightening. We have to look at it in a positive, undisguised, rational and humorous way.' With the world feeling more dangerous than it has for several decades, it's a delightfully optimistic way to finish our interview. 📧

'ACTIVISM IS THE DEFINITION OF LIFE.
NO ACTIVISM, NO LIFE'



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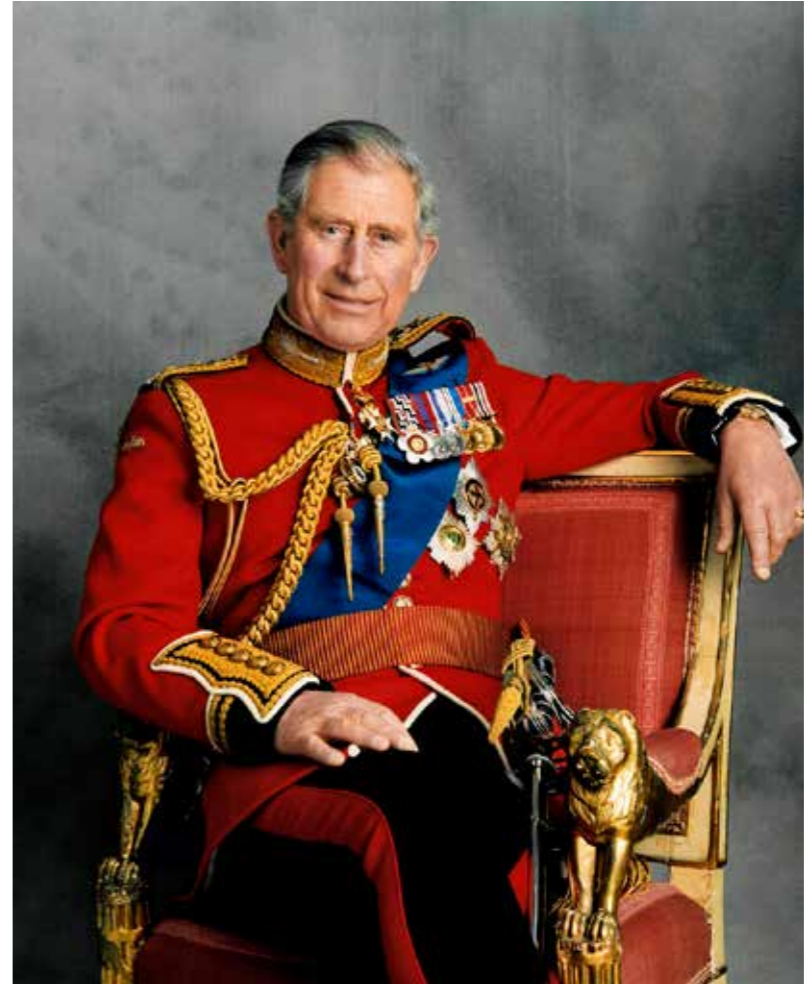
Grant Gibson is a design, craft and architecture writer and runs the award-winning podcast Material Matters

SEE

Ai Weiwei: Making Sense – an exhibition that takes design as its focus, meditating on value, humanity, art and activism; 7 April–30 July; The Design Museum, London; designmuseum.org



Left: Domenico Fetti's *David with the Head of Goliath*. This painting was acquired by Charles I and is on public display in the King's Withdrawing Room at Hampton Court Palace



PA IMAGES/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO/HUGO BURNAND

AN EYE FOR THE ARTS

Without Charles I's avid collecting the nation wouldn't have the extraordinary Royal Collection; without Charles II, we'd have lost what his father amassed. As the coronation of King Charles III approaches, what's in store for the arts? *Gareth Harris* investigates

In the media storm over the auction sale of *Salvator Mundi* over five years ago – Leonardo da Vinci's 'lost' masterpiece, which fetched \$450.3m at Christie's New York – one rather surprising fact stands out. There is a version of *Salvator Mundi* in Moscow, at the Pushkin Museum, that has a 'CR' ('Charles Rex') mark branded on

the back of its frame. The insignia with a crown proves that it was once owned by Charles I. The Stuart monarch's place at the heart of this significant art historical saga reflects his influence and refined taste. During his reign (1625–49), he amassed treasures that make art historians' jaws drop to the floor. Over a

quarter century he acquired hundreds of paintings by artists such as Titian, Raphael and Anthony van Dyck.

This obsession with art was sparked by a visit to Madrid in 1623, when Charles toured the Spanish Habsburg court and was especially taken with Titian's erotic portrayals of mythological subjects. Art »

ROYAL COLLECTING

historian Guido Rebecchini writes in the exhibition catalogue of *Charles I: King and Collector* (Royal Academy of Arts, 2018) that the prince returned to London not only with a ‘taste for [the] erotic’, but also an awareness of how ‘possessing a large and prestigious art collection [could] convey his own dynasty’s power and authority’. The Madrid excursion gave the maverick royal the art-collecting bug. When the Gonzaga Dynasty in Mantua ran into financial trouble around 1627, he swooped in, acquiring a considerable portion of the princely family’s top-notch collection. The first instalment – mainly of paintings – came to £18,280, 12s, 8d (some £3,800,000 in today’s terms); ‘Works by Titian, Raphael, Correggio, Caravaggio, Giulio Romano and Andrea del Sarto transformed the quality and depth of the British holdings wholesale,’ says a Royal Collection Trust statement.

RECORDING TREASURES

Charles I’s collection was meticulously documented by Dutchman Abraham van der Doort, appointed surveyor of the king’s pictures in 1625. In 1639, he completed his inventory, a move possibly prompted by another major acquisition in 1637, comprising 23 Italian paintings from the dealer William Frizell. In his 2006 publication, *The Sale of the Late King’s Goods: Charles I and His Art Collection*, historian Jerry Brotton points out that van der Doort produced a ‘capsule history’ of one of the greatest collections of art in 17th-century Europe. Charles even annotated the finished copy, deigning to ‘confirm the attributions and spelling of those artists he knew were important – Raphael, Titian and Mantegna’. The king’s ‘close attention to detail and tendency towards prevarication made him particularly susceptible to the pleasures of collecting, with its absorption in questions of provenance, attribution, style and judgement’, Brotton observes. But he disputes claims that the king had ‘an instinctive taste for the fine arts... Charles was a great collector but not the great connoisseur assumed by many’, highlighting his reliance on a network of

dealers and agents. Laura Cumming, critic at *The Observer*, attests to the quality of the works nonetheless, saying that the 2018 Royal Academy display was ‘not a show so much as an entire museum of masterpieces’. In 1649 Charles I, accused of treason, was beheaded outside the Banqueting House on Whitehall, home to a dazzling in situ ceiling painting by Rubens, commissioned by the monarch around 1636. His world-class collection was subsequently sold off by the Commonwealth government and dispersed around Europe. The Royal Collection Trust has traced over a third of the works to some 60 public collections – including the Louvre, Prado and Washington DC’s National Gallery of Art – and just as many private collections.

ROYAL RETRIEVAL

Restored to his father’s throne in 1660, Charles II’s first act as monarch was to recover most of his father’s collection. After more than a decade of drabness under Cromwellian rule, Charles II was determined to beautify society via the arts. During his reign he amassed over 1,000 pictures. Art as a token of diplomacy underpins his time on the throne. The so-called ‘merry monarch’ shrewdly realised that art assets could be political bargaining chips. In 1660 he received 28 paintings – including a ravishing Titian, *Madonna and Child in a Landscape with Tobias and the Angel* (c.1535–40) – and 12 antique sculptures from the states of Holland and West Friesland in a bridge-building gesture.

Charles II’s outlook was also more expansive than his father’s. ‘It all comes down to how he transformed Windsor Castle in the late 1670s,’ says Rufus Bird, co-curator of the 2017 exhibition *Charles II: Art and Power* at the Queen’s Gallery, Buckingham Palace. The monarch may have hoped to emulate the achievements

‘AFTER MORE THAN A DECADE OF DRABNESS UNDER CROMWELLIAN RULE, CHARLES II WAS DETERMINED TO BEAUTIFY SOCIETY VIA THE ARTS’



BOTH IMAGES: ROYAL COLLECTION TRUST/© HIS MAJESTY KING CHARLES III 2023

Top: *Charles I with M. de St Antoine*, 1633, by Anthony van Dyck, commissioned by the king and on public display at Windsor Castle
Above: *Charles II*, by John Michael Wright, c.1671–76, to be seen in the Throne Room at the Palace of Holyrood House



Left: acquired by Charles I, Andrea Mantegna’s *The Picture-Bearers* – one of nine canvasses of *The Triumphs of Caesar*, c.1484–92. On public display at Hampton Court Palace
Below left: Titian’s *Madonna and Child in a Landscape with Tobias and the Angel*, c.1535–40, presented to Charles II in 1660 by the states of Holland and West Friesland upon his restoration to the throne. On display in the Picture Gallery, Buckingham Palace (open during the Summer Opening of the State Rooms this year)

of his cousin Louis XIV, who remodelled the Palace of Versailles. ‘Ownership of a painting by, say, Titian says a certain amount about a person,’ says Bird, ‘but re-imagining a building is a quite different matter. Charles II overhauled Windsor entirely, creating magnificent State Apartments on the north side. I think we can understand him best in his approach to the castle.’ He references the many ceiling paintings by Antonio Verrio, only three of which survive, including one of Charles’s queen, Catherine of Braganza, who is depicted, somewhat ironically in light of what is known of their marriage, in the guise of ‘conjugal love’.

THE NEW CAROLEAN AGE

‘Charles II was instrumental in creating his own image, sitting for Samuel Cooper who took his profile for use in coinage,’ Bird observes, adding: ‘and with King Charles III’s coronation in May, we will see once again an important ritual establishing the image of the king.’ Indeed, as a new royal dawn rises, how arts-oriented is our new king? A keen water-colourist, who has been painting since the 1970s, Charles III’s far-reaching innovation in the arts has been the Royal Drawing School, which he co-founded in 2000 with the artist Catherine Goodman to address the increasing lack of observational drawing in art education. The school, located in Shoreditch in east London, runs more than 350 full- and part-time drawing courses »

BOTH IMAGES: ROYAL COLLECTION TRUST/© HIS MAJESTY KING CHARLES III 2023

ROYAL COLLECTING

annually for adults and children of all ages and abilities.

In bringing drawing to the fore – highlighting the most rudimentary and essential skill – the king espouses the purest art form. In an expert commentary on the king's taste in *The Art Newspaper*, Ruth Guilding points out that 'in his vision, the natural world and the field of human endeavour should be in accord, and so he champions rare breeds, old varieties, and art made with brush and pencil'. Guilding's analysis also cites the architectural designer Ben Pentreath, who has worked with the Duchy of Cornwall on a number of projects. He stresses that Charles III's mature vision – as opposed to what some considered his youthful rebellious phase criticising Postmodern architecture – 'is closer to the world of arts and crafts, of [William] Morris and co or vernacular Lutyens'.

In 2018, an art display at Buckingham Palace marking the king's 70th birthday included a personal top 25 of historical works from the Royal Collection. Works selected by the monarch include *The Adoration of the Shepherds* (c.1546) by Jacopo Bassano and a life-size marble bust of Queen Victoria, given to Prince Albert on his birthday in 1851. 'I think the choice reflects the depth of his knowledge about so many aspects of fine art, from



paintings to decorative arts to sculpture,' says art historian Bendor Grosvenor, adding, perhaps mischievously, 'I suppose it's hard not to become a bit of an expert when you grow up with it in almost every room. But it didn't have to be. The history of the royal family is full of people who grew up in a similar situation, yet couldn't tell the difference between a jardiniere and a chamber pot.'

What the arts world waits to see is if King Charles III brings new additions or approaches. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth II some 5,550 acquisitions were made, but those were said, in the main, to be gifts from dignitaries. As Ruth Guilding reported in *The Art Newspaper*, they included 'a basket from Tonga in 1954, a jar of grain from Canada. The Queen was

Above: King Charles III visits the Royal Drawing School in Shoreditch
Below left: Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *Massacre of the Innocents*, c.1565-67, acquired by Charles II in 1660 from William Frizell and on public display in the King's Closet at Windsor Castle

reported to have said that, while the Prince of Wales deplores their quantity and quality, "I've got no taste so I'm delighted with them." But her own purchases remained almost completely uncharted territory: What impact will Charles III's reign have on the Royal Collection and more? We wait to see. 📧

Gareth Harris is an arts writer and editor-at-large of The Art Newspaper

FIND OUT MORE

For more on the Royal Collection Trust, including 2023 exhibitions and visits to royal sites, see rct.uk
For the Royal Drawing School, see royaldrawingschool.org



Left: actor Alan Cumming with his YES Scotland tartan, painted by Christian Hook, 2014
 Below: drag performer Cheddar Gorgeous in a tartan suit by Liquorice Black, 2017



© CHRISTIAN HOOK

POWER PATTERN

It connects communities across the globe and is both loved and scorned: could any textile, asks *Isabella Smith*, be more woven with meaning than tartan? As a new show prepares to open, she explores its lure, too, for artists and designers

From punks in ripped check trousers to royals clad in kilts, tartan can signify anything from tradition to rebellion, status to repression. It is one of the world's best-known fabrics, yet there is simplicity in its making. It is usually woven as a twill weave, crossing the weft threads over and under multiple warp threads; but this is the starting point for myriad patterns – or, as they are known, 'setts'. That exciting potential has made tartan irresistible for fashion designers past and present, from the



© CHEDDAR GORGEIOUS

'TARTAN IS CAPABLE OF STAGGERING COMPLEXITY... IT IS A TEXTILE OF CONTRADICTION'

conventional to the anarchic. The latter was particularly seen in the 1970s, with an influx of countercultural tartan, epitomised by designs such as Malcolm McLaren's 'bondage' kilt at SEX, the boutique he shared with Vivienne Westwood.

'Apparently simple in construction, tartan is also capable of staggering complexity,' writes Jonathan Faiers, professor of fashion thinking, author of *Tartan* and consultant curator of the upcoming exhibition of the same name at V&A Dundee. 'Above all,' he says, 'it is a textile of contradiction.' It's precisely the complex tangle of contradicting signifiers that has made tartan such a rich source of inspiration for generations of artists and designers. In 2014, the artist Christian Hook won Sky Arts' *Portrait Artist of the Year*. The prize was a major commission for the Scottish National Portrait Gallery: to make a painting of renowned Scottish actor Alan Cumming for its collection. Hook spent a week with Cumming, studying everything from his mannerisms to the issues that mattered to him. The result was a vivid portrait in Hook's energetic style, depicting Cumming nude but for a tartan kilt worn like a ruffled ruff, slung raffishly around his neck.

'The kilt represented him as a proud Scotsman. He feels strongly about his identity and his sexuality,' explained Hook in an interview for the gallery. The placement of the leather kilt buckle on Cumming's neck resembles a collar; worn in this way, the kilt carries clear overtones of BDSM. As Hook describes: 'It's got all this dominance and passiveness [...] It's got that element of sexuality in it and it changes the way the kilt is seen.' The choice of textile carries another message: the kilt is made from the official YES Scotland campaign for independence tartan. Its colouring – blue, white, red and green on a purple background – was chosen to combine the colours of Scotland's national flag, the Saltire, with the hues of its landscape.

POLITICS AND PORTRAITS

Such political messaging is part and parcel of the history of tartan. It has been used as propaganda from the 18th century onwards, when Jacobite sympathisers wore tartans to signal support for exiled Stuart king James II. Though his eldest son, Charles, had spent his entire life in Italy, from 1740 he made sure to wear a tartan suit around Rome. After the rebellion was quashed, the English forbade the wearing of Highland dress in 1746, considering it a sign of anti-government sympathies. It wasn't until Queen Victoria began her love affair with Scotland



NATIONAL GALLERIES OF SCOTLAND/SCOTTISH NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

'THE NOTION OF ANCIENT "CLAN TARTANS" - TARTANS BELONGING TO A FAMILY NAME - WAS A SALES PITCH BY 18TH-CENTURY COMMERCIAL WEAVERS'

that tartan gained its establishment credentials. This symbolic messaging continues today. When Britain's then prime minister Theresa May wore a Vivienne Westwood 'Anglomania' suit in Black Watch tartan first to launch her leadership bid, and then again to confirm Brexit, she was signalling her commitment to the union. Likewise, when Nicola Sturgeon wore Slanj Kilts' Homeless tartan face mask during the

Above: Lord Mungo Murray (Am Morair Mungo Moireach) 1668-1700, son of the 1st Marquess of Atholl, by John Michael Wright, c.1683

WOVEN ART

Covid pandemic – sales of which raised money for a homelessness charity – she was signalling her values to the public. Elsewhere, tartan’s countercultural appeal continues to resonate. Drag queen Cheddar Gorgeous has appeared in a loudly checked custom couture suit by Liquorice Black; Charles Jeffrey, the Glaswegian creative director, fashion designer and master of high camp, has returned to tartan time and again. For his Autumn/Winter 2023 Collection, designer Nicholas Daley added a tartan intended to draw together his dual Jamaican and Scottish roots to the official Register of Tartans, using colours designed to represent both sides of his heritage.

Tartans’ use to express identity is, of course, far from new. Portraiture from the 18th and 19th centuries abounds with its symbolic affiliations. A grand painting of Lord Mungo Murray (1668–1700) shows the young aristocrat clad in both fashionable doublet and traditional Highland costume: a plaid of five metres long is belted around his body to form both kilt and cloak. The pairing combines dual aspects of his identity, marrying cosmopolitanism with home-grown pride.

Today, with growing calls for Scottish independence, the political power of tartan is stronger than ever. ‘There’s never been a more important time to do this exhibition,’ asserts V&A Dundee curator Kirsty Hassard, who believes it to be the first major show exploring tartan since the 1920s. ‘The exhibition explores the duality of the textile. It’s historic but also contemporary, it’s a textile of rebellion but it’s also one of oppression, and it’s one that’s constantly used and reinvented by artists and designers.’ She adds: ‘It’s continually modern, despite its historic roots.’

MYTHS AND YARNS

The curators explore the multifaceted nature of tartan through 300 objects spanning everything from architecture to product design, high art to high-street fashion. Among the heterogeneous objects on display are a Scotch tape dispenser, cheerfully chequered car upholstery and 1960s architectural plans by the Dutch architect Dom Hans van der Laan. In tartan, van der Laan saw a prototype grid structure that offered a vision for the urban fabric. Elsewhere, we see artist Edward Bawden apply this grid to decorative effect, using it in linocut wrapping paper designs decorated with bagpipe players from 1960. In 2025, that same grid will form the basis for a new garden at V&A Dundee, created with the Eden Project. This will feature

Right: a tartan design by menswear brand Wales Bonner for adidas Originals, from Spring/Summer 2021
Below: *The Clans and Tartans of Scotland*, a cut paper work, by artist Georgia Russell, 2002



PHOTO BY JEANO EDWARDS



© VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON, 2022

plants used for dyeing yarns before the 19th-century advent of aniline dyes, from ragweed (to create orange) and dandelion (magenta) to sloe (blue-black) and rock lichen (red). ‘Pre-1820, most tartans were “district tartans” based on the natural resources available nearby,’ explains Hassard. The notion of ancient ‘clan tartans’ – tartans belonging to a family name – was a sales pitch by 18th-century commercial weavers. This concept, which appeals both to national and familial loyalties, has had extraordinarily successful afterlife; it endures today.

This popular myth is just one of many misconceptions surrounding tartan. These span everything from the reason for red kilts – that red hid bloodstains best during battle – to the uniquely Scottish nature of the textile. In fact, no single culture can claim to have invented the checked fabric, which has emerged independently everywhere from Maori New Zealand, India and China over the past 5,000 years. This is perhaps unsurprising, given that a grid is the second-easiest pattern (behind stripes) to weave. In Georgia Russell’s artwork *The Clans and Tartans of Scotland* (2002), the artist has ‘un-made’ a book by Robert Bain of the same name. Russell has sliced all but the title into thread-like shreds imitating a woven textile, before encasing it in Perspex. It’s as clear a metaphor for unmaking and remaking Scottish identity as can be, told through the most fitting emblem of them all: tartan. 🇪🇺

SEE

Tartan

V&A Dundee
1 April 2023–
14 January 2024
vam.ac.uk

Isabella Smith is a writer with a special interest in art and craft

Below: Hilma af Klint in her studio at Hamngatan, Stockholm, c.1895
 Below right: Hilma af Klint, *Nr 5*, 1920
 Opposite page: *Group IX SUW, no 19, Swan*, 1915



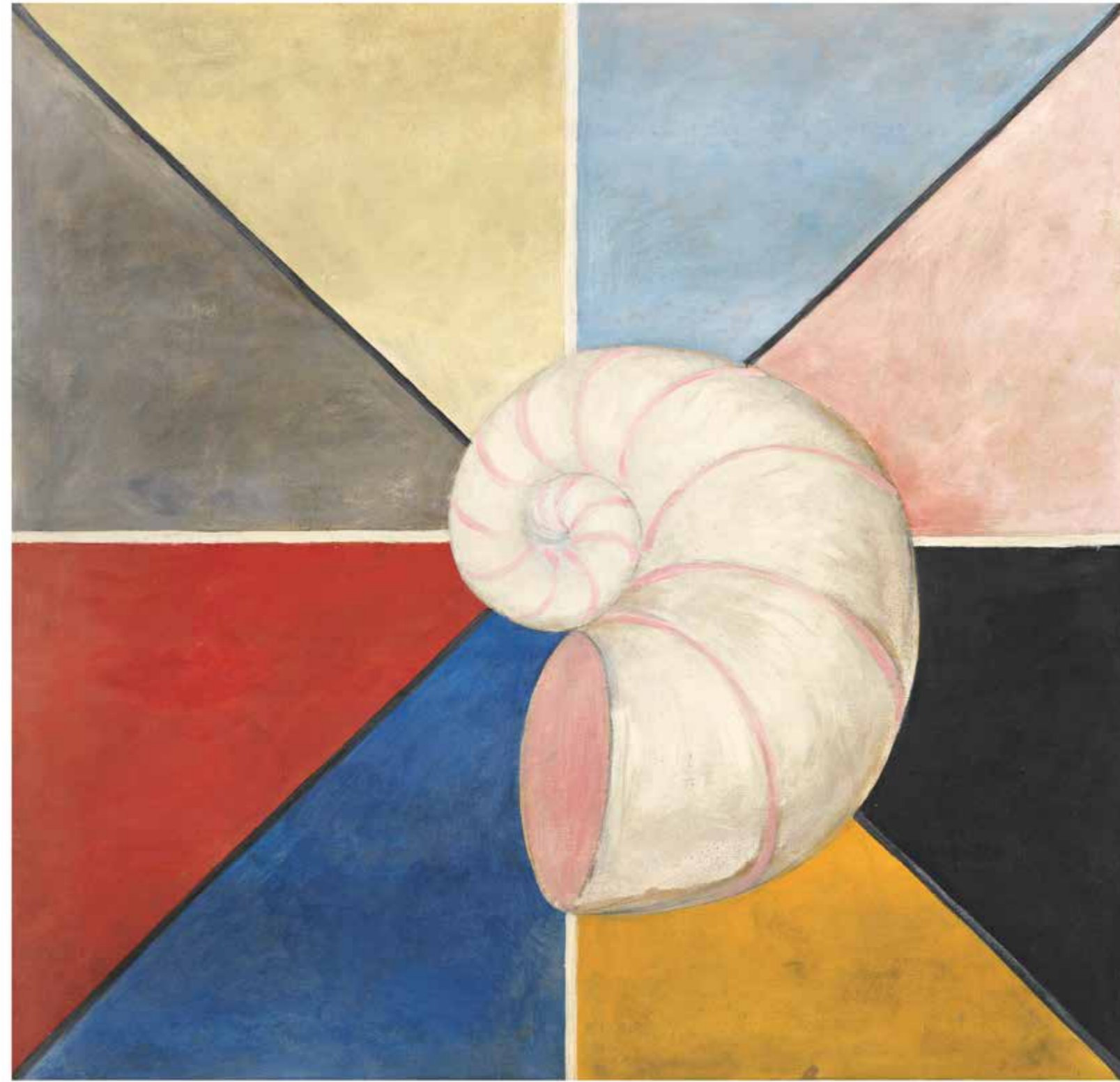
PHOTO COURTESY OF THE HILMA AF KLINT FOUNDATION

At the start of the 20th century, abstract art was a truly awesome revolution. It challenged one of the most accepted ideas about art since the Renaissance: that painting is an imitative art, reproducing the world. The Russian artist Wassily Kandinsky showed non-figurative paintings for the first time in 1911 in Germany. Months later others displayed abstract works in Paris, among them František Kupka and Robert Delaunay. They were followed by many more, including Piet Mondrian. It was a momentous development, giving an aura of greatness to those who did it first. So when, in 1986, abstract paintings done as early as 1906 were shown in Los Angeles, it sent shockwaves around the art world. What's more, these striking works had been created by an unknown painter – a Swedish woman named Hilma af Klint. Should the story of abstract art be rewritten with a new starting point?

Hilma af Klint was born in 1862, near Stockholm, to a family of marine officers and cartographers. Showing early talent in drawing, she went on to study painting. After graduating with honours from Stockholm's Royal Academy of Fine Arts, she »



THE HILMA AF KLINT FOUNDATION

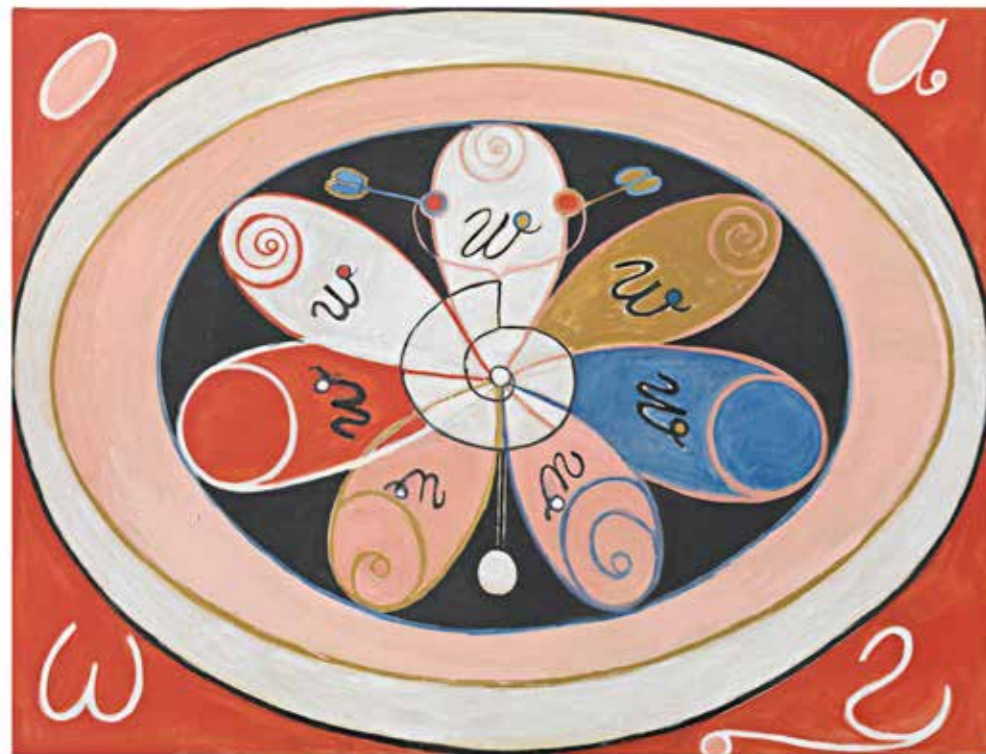


THE MYSTIC PIONEER

Long before the term 'abstract art' was coined, one trailblazing artist was forging the way, producing radical art that was shunned by contemporaries. As a major exhibition of her works prepares to open, *Caroline Levisse* examines the curious story of Hilma af Klint



Left: *Eros, No. 5, 1907*
 Below left: *Svensk Grupp 6, nr. 15, Evolutionen, 1908.*
 Below: *The Ten Largest, Group IV, No. 7, Adulthood, 1907*



ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF THE HILMA AF KLINT FOUNDATION

was given a studio and made her name as a landscape and portrait painter, working in a naturalist, conventional style. Af Klint had other interests, too, such as botany and science. She painted flowers and plants with rigorous precision. Other works reveal an interest in elements such as atoms. Importantly, from 1879, she started exploring the spiritual through Theosophy, Rosicrucianism and later Anthroposophy. She wanted to understand the world, its underlying, invisible structures and forces. For her the world was not limited to what could be studied materially. Like many at the time, she longed for a less materialistic society and wished to develop her spiritual life.

OTHERWORLDLY ART

From 1897 to 1907 af Klint and four other women met weekly to pray, study and engage in spiritualist séances. They called themselves 'The Five' (De Fem). They meticulously recorded the messages revealed to them by spirits they called the 'High Masters'. During this time af Klint made her first spirit drawings, in which abstract patterns and symbols appeared. This was not unusual practice for a medium. In the 1860s in London, medium Georgiana Houghton made fascinating pictures during séances, many of colourful lines that do not represent anything recognisable. In 1906 af Klint revealed to her friends that one of the High Masters, Amaliel, had instructed her to produce a series of paintings 'on an astral plane'. This led to the dissolution of The Five; some thought the project would lead her to madness. Af Klint continued; by 1915 she had created 193 paintings, called *The Paintings for the Temple*. At first the works were 'dictated' by spirits. She explained: 'The pictures were painted directly through me, without any preliminary drawings, and with great force. I had no idea what the paintings were supposed to depict; nevertheless I worked swiftly and surely, without changing a single brushstroke.' From 1912, resuming work after a hiatus, she did so more freely. She now described herself as an interpreter of the spirits'

messages. As years passed, she came to think of herself as more in control of the creative process.

Af Klint often worked in series. *Youth* and *Adulthood* are part of *The Ten Largest*. These are monumental, measuring 328 x 240cm. She worked fast, finishing all 10 works in just over two months. In a 1908 entry in her notebook, she noted the spirits judged them 'paradisically beautiful'. Her notes also reveal her doubt and exhaustion. The theme behind *The Ten Largest* is the cycle of life, from birth to youth, maturity and old age. Seen altogether they are impressive. As you walk from one to the next, the deep and light blue from the start turns to bright orange before becoming a pink-violet that progressively becomes fainter. The forms are organic at first, exuberant and energetic, but become static, symmetrical, even geometrical. Here and there we recognise shells and stylised flowers, Roman numerals and letters, but not much more. When painters like Caspar David Friedrich or Thomas Cole depicted life stages, they used the ship as a symbol of life's journey and represented human figures of different ages. Even af Klint's contemporary Edvard Munch represented the cyclical nature of life through young and old human figures. In comparison, af Klint's works are more modern, as she used colours and shapes to express this existential and spiritual theme.

MYSTERY AND DIFFERENCE

Af Klint made some 1,200 works. Her esoteric oeuvre is diverse. Some symbols recur, such as the spiral, shells, pyramids, circle, square and flowers, as well as some letters. There are also swans, crosses and occasional human figures. It is all very mysterious; none of it follows a known iconography. Af Klint's was a secret knowledge. She was not the only artist interested in the spiritual. Kandinsky, Kupka and Mondrian all had similar interests. But for decades this source of inspiration was downplayed as marginal, or ignored in favour of a formalist approach, one that focused on abstract art as the ultimate development of art for art's sake.

'THE PICTURES WERE PAINTED DIRECTLY THROUGH ME, WITHOUT ANY PRELIMINARY DRAWINGS, AND WITH GREAT FORCE. I HAD NO IDEA WHAT THE PAINTINGS WERE SUPPOSED TO DEPICT'

ARTIST PROFILE



Left: *On the Viewing of Flowers and Trees*, 1922
Below left: *Svensk Grupp 6, nr. 14, Evolutionen*, 1908
Below: *The Ten Largest, Group IV, No. 3, Youth*, 1907



For Mondrian, the interest in the spiritual went beyond curiosity. In 1909 he joined the Dutch Theosophical Society, remaining a member until his death. Like af Klint, artists such as he owned and read occult literature, including Madame Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine* and Annie Besant and Charles Leadbeater's *Thought-Forms*. And like af Klint, Kandinsky and Mondrian attended lectures given by Theosophists and Anthroposophists such as Rudolf Steiner. Mondrian even wrote to Steiner to invite him to visit his atelier. Steiner never answered. Af Klint, on the other hand, did meet the Anthroposophical leader, convincing him to see her occult paintings. He did not encourage her. Perhaps, in 1910, the sheer novelty of these paintings was just too unsettling.

A crucial difference between af Klint and other pioneers of abstract art is that she never joined a group (such as De Stijl), and did not show works in *avant-garde* settings (such as Der Sturm). She only showed within esoteric circles; little interest in her art was generated. Eventually she decided

the world was not ready for her art. When she died in 1944 her works went to her nephew, Erik af Klint, with the instruction that her paintings should not be shown for 20 years. Erik kept the works (which he found odd), and in 1970 presented them to Stockholm's Moderna Museet, only to be turned down. In 1986, finally, her art caught a curator's attention. Maurice Tuchman, working on the exhibition *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985* (shown in Chicago and the Netherlands) included her works at the last minute.

Still, it was not until the 2010s that af Klint became more visible as an artist and exhibitions and publications increased. The 2013 exhibition at the Moderna Museet and the 2018 show at New York's Guggenheim Museum were blockbusters. More recently, a 2022 Lasse Hallström film, *Hilma*, has been released; a VR experience placing her works in a virtual 'temple' – inspired by the one she had herself imagined for her works – was created; and the catalogue raisonné of her works is complete. Now Tate Modern is preparing to open a major exhibition focused on af Klint's art alongside that of Mondrian. With her work now acclaimed across the world, yet still dividing opinion, it is clear that af Klint's art strikes a chord with today's audience and scholars. Is this because her work enables us to challenge the dominant, linear narrative about modern art? Does it question the male-dominated perspective, and the secular and formalist perspective (of art for art's sake)? What is certain is that af Klint's art shows that history is never still, nor written once and for all. 📖



OUR EXPERT'S STORY

Caroline Levisse

Arts Society Accredited Lecturer



- Caroline is an art historian who specialises in modern European art with a focus on Scandinavia
- Among her lectures for The Arts Society are *Scandinavian landscape painting (1840-1910)*; *Danish Modernism: the Skagen painters* and *Hilma af Klint: the first abstract painter of the 20th century?*

SEE

Hilma af Klint & Piet Mondrian: Forms of Life

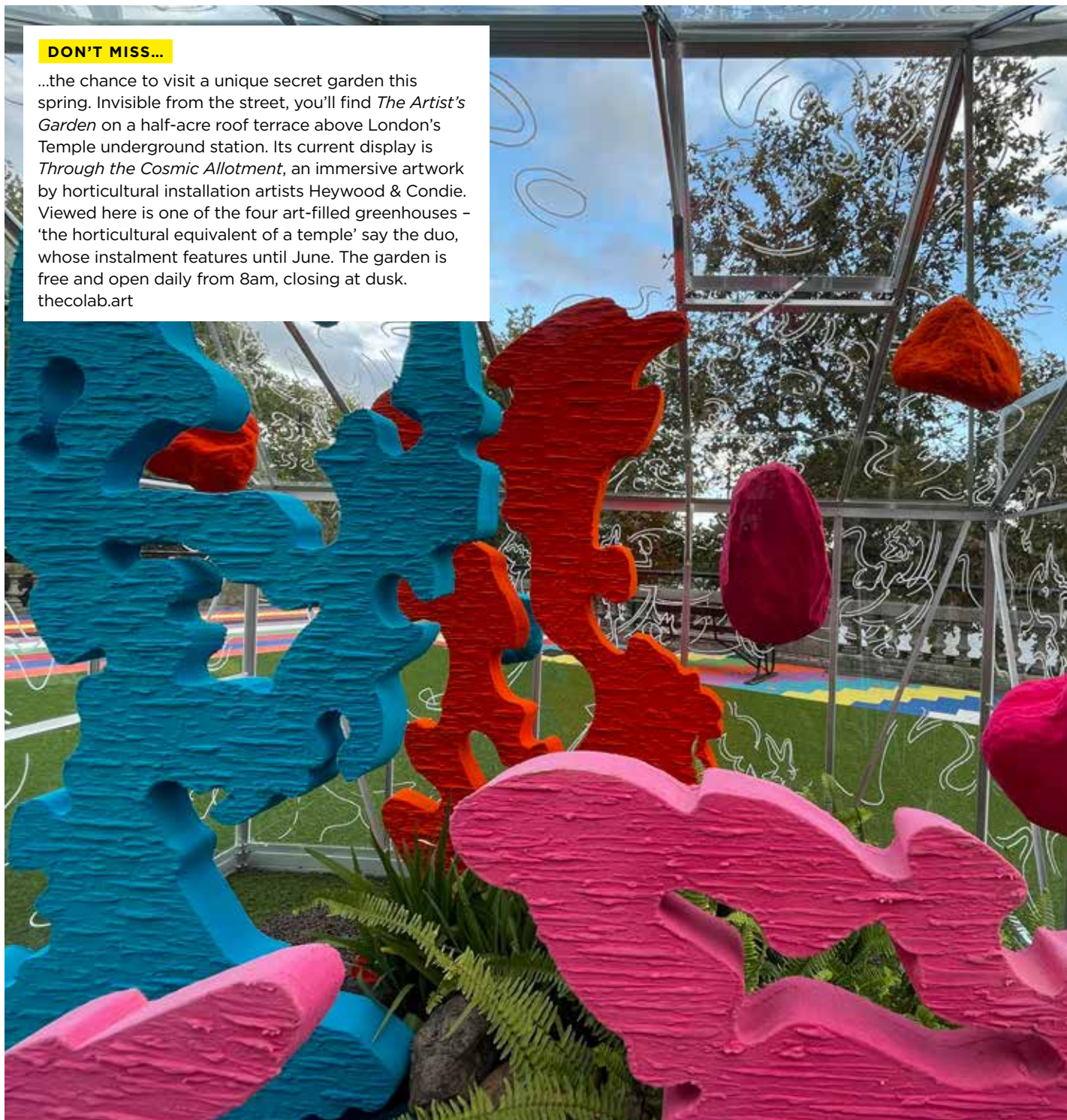
Tate Modern
20 April-3 September
[tate.org.uk](https://www.tate.org.uk)

THE ARTS SOCIETY FOCUS

ARTS SOCIETY FEATURES AND NEWS, PLUS OUR WHAT'S ON LISTINGS AND SPECIAL OFFERS

DON'T MISS...

...the chance to visit a unique secret garden this spring. Invisible from the street, you'll find *The Artist's Garden* on a half-acre roof terrace above London's Temple underground station. Its current display is *Through the Cosmic Allotment*, an immersive artwork by horticultural installation artists Heywood & Condie. Viewed here is one of the four art-filled greenhouses – 'the horticultural equivalent of a temple' say the duo, whose instalment features until June. The garden is free and open daily from 8am, closing at dusk. thecolab.art





TALENT SPOTTING

The Arts Society and the Royal Society of British Artists partnership has long made a real difference to next-generation artists. *Ciaran Sneddon* meets one of those rising stars

The joy of discovering an impressive new artist from a younger generation of creatives can be near unparalleled. It is this delight that has fuelled one of The Arts Society's most invigorating partnerships, which year on year has drawn attention to young stars who show outstanding skill and expression. Working with the Royal Society of British Artists (RBA), The Arts Society has taken a hand-picked selection of artworks created by top A-level art students and sees them put them on display at the Mall Galleries. For some of these young artists, it's the first time they'll see their pieces on show beyond their school halls. Seeing is believing: and the artists who have been selected for exhibition can see that a dream of professional artistry is within reach.

While each of this year's 20 selected winners deserves merit, one piece secured further success as the recipient of The Arts Society and RBA Star Students Chair's Award. Originally spotted by The Arts Society South East Suffolk, and then personally selected for this award by Chair Liz Woods, Imogen Hare's artwork, *Hands in Honey*, is truly arresting. Liz Woods explains: 'I chose this image of hands because in recent times hands seem to have become part of the national zeitgeist. Healing hands, washing hands, lending a hand – those are the things that came to mind when I saw this beautifully executed painting. It also made me think of past images of hands, from Michelangelo to Henry Moore. It was a joy to participate in a small way in celebrating the talents of all the chosen artists. Congratulations to all the finalists and especially to Imogen for this wonderful painting.'

MEET THE WINNING ARTIST

For Imogen, a Suffolk-based A-level art student, art is a family affair. She tells us: 'My passion for art initially came from growing up with my grandad, who was an artist, and with my sister, who took the same course as I am now. Both are still massive inspirations to me.'

'SEEING IS BELIEVING: AND THE ARTISTS WHO HAVE BEEN SELECTED FOR EXHIBITION CAN SEE THAT A DREAM OF PROFESSIONAL ARTISTRY IS WITHIN REACH'



Above: award winner Imogen Hare
Opposite: Imogen's *Hands in Honey*

Imogen has also found interest in other artists, including her current favourite: Jenny Saville, whose work she enjoys for its striking and confident nature.

Imogen's *Hands in Honey* is one piece from a five-part series, each element representing a different stage of grief. Plucked from the very centre of this collection, this work is an expression of bargaining, and in its initial exhibition it was bracketed by those other sensations: denial and anger to the left, depression and acceptance to the right. 'The cupped hands make the honey appear to be an offering, something sweet but messy and hard to get rid of,' explains Imogen. 'However, the separated fingers allow the honey to slip through – a nod to the

saying "slipping through my fingers" – and I found it added a feeling of desperation. I chose the human form as it is my preferred subject, but I strayed from the more obvious portraits of hands in order to challenge myself. Hands are expressive: they are relied on yet often taken for granted. I find a person's hands tell a lot about them and their experiences – so they were the perfect subject for my series.'

Despite being the midpoint of the pentalogy, *Hands in Honey* was the first piece to be completed. 'I took many reference photos,' Imogen explains, 'but I focused on seeing the colours and shapes within the photo as opposed to seeing the actual hand. This allowed me to be truthful and realistic, instead of painting what I believed a hand should look like.' As for winning the award? 'It is so flattering and inspiring that I was able to achieve what I set out to do – to create a piece that made people stop, look and think,' says Imogen. 'I love the concept of capturing something for someone, visualising their ideas and messages when they can't.'



The Royal Society of British Artists Bicentennial Annual Exhibition at the Mall Galleries runs until 11 March. Each of the 20 young artists included in this exhibition was discovered by a different Society. For more details of the exhibition, see the Mall Galleries website: mallgalleries.org.uk For the full list of artists chosen and to discover more on this story, go to theartsociety.org

A HELPING HAND

THE ARTS SOCIETY IN ACTION



Our overview of projects and programmes to receive recent Arts Society funding

Some 41 applicants were successful in their bid for the autumn 2022 Arts Society grants. Each bid represented an initiative or project that gives access to the arts for those usually unable to connect with them. Here, we include the full list of those who will benefit from the grants, with information on just some of the brilliant applicants' plans for the future, and a project that took place in 2022.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

In May 2022, a cast of 72 young performers invited audiences to a Brighton skatepark to transport them to a new version of Verona. Windmill Young Actors' *Romeo and Juliet* combined Shakespeare's original text with new work by musician Marshall Mandiangu and Project Female dance company. Into the mix, too, went verbatim discussions of the themes of love, relationships, sexuality and violence, taken from discussions with young people such as those acting and performing. Many cast members came from local youth action projects; after performances they cited the show as a way of guiding young

people away from criminal activity. 'I think it's important that people know about things like this,' said one performer, 'because I don't think it's on the radar of people who should know about it [like possible gang members].' The use of Hollingdean skatepark added both an element of modernity and an infusion of authenticity. 'Performing at the skatepark was interesting, because that's the place where young people hang out a lot,' explained another participant. 'It's a place they call home from home.' Performing outside, says Mandiangu, 'especially at an unconventional venue like this, added a layer of intimacy that I wouldn't have otherwise got if on stage in the musical world'.



SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS IN AUTUMN 2022

The Arts Society Ascot	Bishopsland Educational Trust, Reading
The Arts Society Basingstoke	Blue Cabin, Gateshead
The Arts Society Bromley	Bolton Lads and Girls Club, Bolton
The Arts Society Dove Valley (Ashbourne)	Burton at Bideford, Devon
The Arts Society Exe	Campbeltown Picture House, Campbeltown, Argyll and Bute
The Arts Society Exeter	Culture Shift, Lewes
The Arts Society Gade Valley	Drama Express, Cornwall
The Arts Society Harborough	Greentop Community Circus Centre, Sheffield
The Arts Society King's Lynn	The Heritage Crafts Association, Somerset
The Arts Society Kingston Langley	International Guitar Foundation and Festivals (IGF), London
The Arts Society Nerja	The People's Orchestra, West Bromwich
The Arts Society New Forest	Phoenix Arts Association, Brighton
The Arts Society North Wiltshire	Severn Arts, Worcester
The Arts Society Salisbury	SICK! Festival, Manchester
The Arts Society Southport	Starling, Manchester
The Arts Society Thames	START, Salford
The Arts Society Wensleydale	St Martin-in-the-Fields Trust, London
The Arts Society West Sussex	Toonspeak Young People's Theatre, Glasgow
The Arts Society Wolverhampton	Towner Eastbourne, Eastbourne

THE WIDER PICTURE

External applicants to have received grants:

acta Community Theatre, Bristol
Benedetti Foundation, Edinburgh

Victor Batte-Lay Foundation, Colchester



FIND OUT MORE

The Patricia Fay Memorial Fund is open to applicants twice a year, in the autumn and spring. Organisations, including Arts Societies, are able to apply for projects that meet the charitable objectives of The Arts Society and make a difference to people's lives. For more information, visit theartsociety.org/grants

SPRING 2023

Our guide to this season's arts and culture events

WORDS: ANNIE DAVIES

LONDON

Titus Andronicus
Sam Wanamaker
Playhouse

UNTIL 15 APR
The bodies pile up in Shakespeare's tragedy. shakespearesglobe.com
T: 020 7401 9919

Ukraine: Photographs from the Frontline

Imperial War Museum
UNTIL 8 MAY
Powerful photographs taken by Anastasia Taylor-Lind from 2014 to 2022. iwm.org.uk
T: 020 7416 5000

Beyond the Streets London
Saatchi Gallery

UNTIL 9 MAY
The most extensive exhibition of graffiti and street art ever in the UK. saatchigallery.com
T: 020 7811 3070

Giorgio Morandi: Masterpieces from the Magnani-Rocca Foundation

Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art
UNTIL 28 MAY
Fifty of the artist's enigmatic works. estorickcollection.com
020 7704 9522

Peter Doig
The Courtauld Gallery

UNTIL 29 MAY
A major exhibition of works created by this leading contemporary artist. courtauld.ac.uk/gallery
T: 020 7848 2526

David Hockney: Bigger & Closer (Not Smaller & Further Away)

Lightroom
UNTIL 4 JUN
Visitors experience the world as Hockney sees it in a series of large-scale projections. lightroom.uk
T: 0300 303 4216

Donatello: Sculpting the Renaissance

Victoria and Albert Museum
UNTIL 11 JUN
The first UK exhibition to celebrate Donatello, arguably the greatest sculptor of all time. vam.ac.uk
T: 020 7942 2000

Wren 300
ONGOING

Wren 300 is a year-long education and conservation programme for adults and children to mark the 300th anniversary of the death of Sir Christopher Wren. wren300.org; squaremilechurches.co.uk/wren-300

Souls Grown Deep Like the Rivers: Black Artists from the American South

Royal Academy
17 MAR-18 JUN
Discover the work of the untrained Black artists of America's Deep South. royalacademy.org.uk
T: 020 7300 8090

After Impressionism: Inventing Modern Art
The National Gallery

25 MAR-13 AUG



DON'T MISS
THE ROSSETTIS

Tate Britain
6 APR-24 SEPT
This immersive exhibition uses poetry, drawings, paintings, photography and design to explore the romance and radicalism of the work of revolutionary siblings Christina and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and Dante Gabriel's wife, Elizabeth (née Siddal). From 26 April, catch, too, *Isaac Julien*, a solo exhibition of the work of one of the leading artists working in film and video today; on until 20 August. tate.org.uk
T: 020 7887 8888

This exhibition focuses on the achievements of artists such as Van Gogh, Cezanne and Gauguin who were among the first to break with tradition and lay the foundations for the art of the 20th and 21st centuries. nationalgallery.org.uk
T: 020 7747 2885

Berthe Morisot: Shaping Impressionism
Dulwich Picture Gallery

31 MAR-10 SEPT
This major exhibition of Morisot's art brings together important works. dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk
T: 020 8693 5254

Luxury and Power: Persia to Greece

The British Museum
4 MAY-13 AUG
An exhibition of objects in gold, silver and glass from

the first millennium BC reveals how these luxuries influenced politics in Europe and Asia. britishmuseum.org
T: 020 7323 8181

Coronation Celebration! The Royal Choral Society's 150th Anniversary Concert

Royal Albert Hall
7 MAY
The Royal Choral Society and Royal Philharmonic Orchestra mark Charles III's coronation and the choir's 150th anniversary. royalalberthall.com
T: 020 7589 8212

Ballet Black: Pioneers

Theatre Royal Stratford East
10-20 MAY
A double bill from two award-winning

MONNA VAINNA, 1866, DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI © TATE

BIG WOMEN

Firstsite, Colchester; until 18 Jun

One of Britain's leading artists, Sarah Lucas, is the curator of this major exhibition of art by prominent female artists, among them Maggi Hambling, Gillian Wearing, Sue Webster, Polly Morgan and Yoko Brown, whose *Untitled*, 2022, a bloom made of tana lawn cotton, is shown here. firstsite.uk; 01206 713700



© YOKO BROWN

choreographers. Will Tuckett's *Then Or Now* blends classical ballet, music and the poetry of Adrienne Rich; Mthuzeli November's *NINA: By Whatever Means* is inspired by musician Nina Simone. stratfordeast.com
T: 020 8534 0310

THE SOUTH AND EAST OF ENGLAND

Trickster Figures: Sculpture and the Body
MK Gallery, Milton Keynes
UNTIL 7 MAY

A show that embraces sculpture in its widest sense, including sculpture that can be worn. mkgallery.org
T: 01908 676900

Labyrinth: Knossos, Myth & Reality

Ashmolean Museum, Oxford
UNTIL 30 JUL
The minotaur was imprisoned in a labyrinth at the Palace of Knossos. This show 'explores' the palace and the search for the legendary labyrinth. ashmolean.org
T: 01865 278000

Empowering Art: Indigenous Creativity and Activism from North America's Northwest Coast

Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia, Norwich
UNTIL 30 JUL
Contemporary and historical works tell the

story of the coast's artistic and cultural traditions. sainsburycentre.ac.uk
T: 01603 593199

Telling Tales: The Story of Narrative Art
Southampton City Art Gallery

17 MAR-1 JUL
Narrative art was the reality TV of the Victorian era. Sniffed at by the artistic elite, the public flocked to see it. This

exhibition reveals the tales they saw. southamptoncityartgallery.com
T: 02380 834536

Soutine / Kossoff
Hastings Contemporary

1 APR-24 SEPT
The first UK exhibition to explore the artistic relationship between two major figures in 20th-century art: Leon Kossoff and Chaim Soutine.



DON'T MISS

A QUIET FIRE
Brighton CCA
UNTIL 13 MAY

Pictured is *Sweetest Devotion*, a hand-stitched silk collage on display now in Malawian artist Billie Zangewa's first major UK exhibition. The show includes a new, epic, site-specific seascape commission. This has been created by Zangewa adopting the format and scale of the classical canon, from tapestries to history painting, using it in electrifying fashion to illustrate the life of the marginalised or under-represented. brightoncca.art
T: 01273 643010

hastingscontemporary.org
01424 728377

Scott Bradlee's Postmodern Jukebox
De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill

27 APR
The New York pop-jazz outfit delivers today's hits in yesterday's style. dlwp.com
T: 01424 229111

Corelli Ensemble: Gala Concert
Seaford Baptist Church

30 APR
Cellist Raphael Wallfisch joins the Corelli Ensemble for a special concert. corelliensemble.co.uk
Tickets: eventbrite.co.uk/e/393572234147

Brighton Festival
Various venues, Brighton

6-28 MAY
Musician, DJ, producer and broadcaster Nabihah Iqbal is the guest director of this year's festival. brightonfestival.org
T: 01273 709709

Gwen John: Art and Life in London and Paris
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester

13 MAY-8 OCT
Overshadowed by her brother, Augustus, this show places the brilliant Gwen in the spotlight. pallant.org.uk
T: 01243 774557

Rhiannon Giddens and Francesco Turrisi
Saffron Hall, Saffron Walden

14 MAY

Rhiannon Giddens joins fellow multi-instrumentalist Francesco Turrisi. For more, see rhiannongiddens.com. saffronhall.com
T: 0845 548 7650

KITE
Kirtlington Park, Oxfordshire

9-11 JUN
The line-up for the festival of ideas and music includes music from Candi Staton and ideas from comedian Shazia Mirza. kitefestival.co.uk
info@kitefestival.co.uk

Aldeburgh Festival
Various venues

9-25 JUN
String quartets, orchestras, exhibitions, films and more are on the programme. brittenpearsarts.org
T: 01728 687110

THE MIDLANDS

Shemza Digital: Across Generations
Wolverhampton Art Gallery

UNTIL 16 APR
Works from abstract painter Anwar Jalal Shemza and his granddaughter, multimedia artist Aphra Shemza. www.wolverhamptonart.org.uk
T: 01902 552055

Tudor Mystery: A Master Painter Revealed

Compton Verney, Stratford-upon-Avon
UNTIL 7 MAY
Use your detective skills to uncover the identity of the



For news of The Arts Society events near you, see theartsociety.org/events

For our monthly 'top 5 arts shows' and 'Instant Expert' art e-talks, sign up at theartsociety.org/signup

*Details correct at time of going to press; please check with all sites before planning your visit

COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

artist known only as the Master of the Countess of Warwick.
comptonverney.org.uk
T: 01926 645500

**Carolyn Lazard:
Long Take**

**Rosalind Nashashibi:
Hooks**

**Charlotte Johannesson
Nottingham Contemporary**

UNTIL 7 MAY

Artist Charlotte Johannesson combines textiles and the digital; Carolyn Lazard uses sound and text to explore dance; and Rosalind Nashashibi exhibits dreamlike paintings created over the past year. nottinghamcontemporary.org

T: 0115 948 9750

**Jennie Moncur:
Interrupted Views**

**The Harley Gallery,
Workshop**

25 MAR-18 JUN

Colourful tapestries demonstrate the possibilities offered by the medium. Previously working on large-scale works, Moncur explores the potential of smaller, more intimate pieces. harleygallery.co.uk
T: 01909 501700

**Melati Suryodarmo
IKON Gallery,
Birmingham**

17 MAY-3 SEPT

Suryodarmo's exhibition includes live performances by herself, and by local artists and communities. ikon-gallery.org
T: 0121 248 0708

RSC: Julius Caesar

Theatre Royal, Nottingham
23-27 MAY

Shakespeare's tale of politics and power is brought to life by director Atri Banerjee.

trch.co.uk

T: 0115 989 5555

WALES

**Portraits from the
Tabernacle Collection**

MOMA Machynlleth

UNTIL 22 APR

Includes work by Ruskin Spear and John Bratby.

moma.cymru

T: 01654 703355

The Sea Horizon

National Museum Cardiff

UNTIL 10 SEPT

Photographs by Garry Fabian Miller show Wales's landscapes as they change over time.

museum.wales

T: 0300 111 2333

**Stefan Brüggemann: Not
Black, Not White, Silver**

MOSTYN, Llandudno

18 MAR-17 JUN

The first solo UK exhibition by Mexican-German artist Brüggemann.

mostyn.org

T: 01492 879201

**The Ocean At The End
of the Lane**

**Wales Millennium Centre,
Cardiff**

30 MAY-3 JUN

The National Theatre's adaptation of Neil Gaiman's tale of myth and friendship.

wmc.org.uk

T: 029 2063 6464



DON'T MISS

**WILHELMINA BARNS-GRAHAM:
PATHS TO ABSTRACTION**

Hatton Gallery, Newcastle University

UNTIL 20 MAY

An exhibition that places the beautiful work of Scottish artist Wilhelmina Barns-Graham in the spotlight. Seen here is her *Red Table*, 1952. This will be a significant show with over 70 pieces drawn from five decades of the artist's career, including works rarely seen in public.

hattongallery.org.uk

T: 0191 277 8877

**THE WEST
OF ENGLAND**

**A Year in the Life of
Chew Stoke Village
by Martin Parr**

**The Martin Parr
Foundation, Bristol**

UNTIL 9 APR

In 1992 photographer Parr embedded himself in the Somerset village of Chew Stoke. These pictures are the result.

martinparrfoundation.org

T: 0117 329 3270

**Illustrating the World:
Woodcuts in the age
of Dürer**

**The Holburne Museum,
Bath**

UNTIL 23 APR

A rare chance to see the complete set of woodcuts known as *The Great Passion*, by Albrecht Dürer.

holburne.org

T: 01225 388569

**Earth Spells: Witches
of the Anthropocene**

**Royal Albert Memorial
Museum and Art Gallery,
Exeter**

UNTIL 7 MAY

This show explores the nature of magic and witchcraft.

rammuseum.org.uk

T: 01392 265858

**We Are Floating
in Space**

**Newlyn Art Gallery
and Exchange**

UNTIL 3 JUN

A show by artists working in Devon and Cornwall, using the coastline and materials found on the shoreline as inspiration.

newlynartgallery.co.uk

T: 01736 363715

**In Her Own Voice: The
Art of Lucy Kemp-Welch**

**Russell-Cotes Art Gallery,
Bournemouth**

1 APR-1 OCT

Lucy Kemp-Welch was one of Britain's top equestrian painters. This exhibition coincides with the

publication of a new biography. Find out more about her in our online 'Instant Expert' with curator and Arts Society Lecturer David Boyd Haycock at theartsociety.org
russellcotes.com
T: 01202 128000

**Peter Braithwaite:
Rediscovering
Black Portraiture**

**Bristol Museum and
Art Gallery**

14 APR-16 JUL

During lockdown, artist and broadcaster Braithwaite researched and reimaged over 100 portraits of black sitters as part of an online challenge. It led to this photographic exhibition. bristolmuseums.org.uk
T: 0117 922 3571

**BSO: Rachmaninov
First and Last**

**Lighthouse, Arts and
Entertainment, Poole**

19 APR

This Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra concert is also being livestreamed via the BSO's website: bsolive.com. lighthousepoole.co.uk
T: 01202 280000

**THE NORTH
OF ENGLAND**

**Marvellous and
Mischievous: Literature's
Young Rebels**

York Art Gallery

UNTIL 4 JUN

The stories of famous rebels in children's literature. yorkartgallery.org.uk
T: 01904 687687

Modern Makers**The Bowes Museum,
Barnard Castle****UNTIL 18 JUN**

Students from the Northern School of Art look at ways of repurposing materials. thebowesmuseum.org.uk
T: 01833 690606

**The Ruskin Collection:
Comes the Flood****Millennium Gallery, Sheffield****UNTIL 24 JUN**

Looking at Venice and major floods in Sheffield, this show considers the consequences of flooding. sheffieldmuseums.org.uk
T: 0114 278 2600

**Golden Mummies
of Egypt****Manchester Museum
ONGOING**

This exhibition centres on the museum's collection of mummies from the Graeco-Roman period. museum.manchester.ac.uk
T: 0161 275 2648

Michael E Smith**Henry Moore Institute,
Leeds****24 MAR-18 JUN**

Smith uses found objects to address a culture of aggressive consumption and dwindling reserves. henry-moore.org
T: 01132 467467

Chris Killip: Retrospective**1 APR-3 SEPT****Larry Achiampong:
Wayfinder 20 MAY-29 OCT**
Baltic, Gateshead

A retrospective by documentary photographer Killip, while artist

Achiampong explores class, gender, pop culture and colonisation. balticmill.com
T: 0191 478 1810

**Lindsey Mendick: Where
The Bodies Are Buried****The Weston Gallery,
Yorkshire Sculpture Park,
Wakefield****6 APR-3 SEPT**

Mendick's immersive show mixes personal memories with the history of the Bretton estate and TV from the 1980s to early 2000s. yvsp.org.uk
T: 01924 832631

**Royal Northern Sinfonia:
Benedetti, Grosvenor
and Kanneh-Mason****Sage Gateshead
14 APR**

Three classical stars join forces for a performance of Beethoven's *Triple Concerto*. sagegateshead.com
T: 0191 443 4661

**Anne Redpath and
her Circle****The Gallery Granary,
Berwick-upon-Tweed****20 MAY-8 OCT**

A show dedicated to one of Scotland's finest mid-20th-century painters. maltingsberwick.co.uk
T: 01289 330999

**Opera North: Requiem
Leeds Grand Theatre****26, 30 MAY, 1, 3, 4 JUN**

Opera North and Phoenix Dance Theatre create a unique response to the pandemic. Dane Hurst choreographs Mozart's final masterpiece alongside

**DON'T MISS****KAFFE FASSETT:
THE POWER OF PATTERN****Dovecot Studios, Edinburgh****31 MAR-8 JUL**

A show focused on the vibrant work of Kaffe Fassett, one of the most successful textile artists and designers working in contemporary craft today. Pieces on show have been drawn from his 50-year career to date. On 30 March the artist will give a guided tour. dovecotstudios.com
T: 0131 5503660

a contemporary work created with South African artists. leedsheritagetheatres.com
T: 0113 243 0808

Liverpool Biennial 2023**Tate Liverpool and venues
across the city****10 JUN-17 SEPT**

The largest festival of contemporary art in the UK. tate.org.uk
T: 0151 702 7400

SCOTLAND**Opera Highlights****Venues across the country****UNTIL 25 MAR**

Scottish Opera performs *Opera Highlights* on tour.

scottishopera.org.uk
T: 0141 248 4567

**Elizabeth Price:
Underfoot****The Hunterian, Glasgow****UNTIL 16 APR**

Price's exhibition celebrates the textile heritage of Glasgow's industrial age. gla.ac.uk
T: 0141 330 4221

**Incoming: New
Acquisitions at the
City Art Centre****City Art Centre, Edinburgh****UNTIL 28 MAY**

The collection traces the history of the visual arts in Scotland from the 17th century to the present day.

edinburghmuseums.org.uk
T: 0313 529 3993

**Making a Splash:
A Century of
Women's Beachwear****Aberdeen Art Gallery
10 JUN 2023-14 JAN 2024**

Exploring how seaside fashions have been influenced by social and political change, the film industry and innovations in design and materials. aberdeencity.gov.uk
T: 0300 020 0293

NORTHERN IRELAND**New Exits: 10 Years
of Painting Shows****The MAC, Belfast****UNTIL 26 MAR**

Celebrate 10 years of the MAC with work from graduates of Belfast School of Art. themaclive.com
T: 028 9023 5053

**The Dritthaib's Ball
Ulster Museum, Belfast****UNTIL 4 SEPT**

Array Collective's Turner Prize-winning installation. ulstermuseum.org
T: 028 9044 0000

**Vinyl Island
(Astral Weeks)****Island Arts Centre, Lisburn
31 MAR**

Immerse yourself in Van Morrison's classic album, with music from Anthony Toner and thoughts from *Nothing is Real* podcaster Steven Cockcroft. islandartscentre.com
arts.information@lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk



Beautiful view of the historic city of Siena, Tuscany

Seeking the sights

With over 150 destinations to choose from, Travel Editions has tours that offer discerning travellers the very best experiences

The Arts Society affiliate Travel Editions has a mantra when it comes to its tours and short breaks: they are for travellers, not tourists. The company understands the thrill of discovery and the joy of exploration; and it knows precisely what those seeking a cultural break have on their wish list. Importantly, Travel Editions recognises how easy it might be to tick off the sights, while somehow missing the details that bring the stories of those places alive. To ensure that never happens, each of its tours has an expert guide

on hand, making every holiday a truly memorable, inspiring experience. Travel Editions tours cover myriad interests too. There is a vibrant range of arts and architecture breaks. Those with a love of walking, gardens and wildlife will find exciting options in the portfolio. And there are holidays that focus on culinary specialities, music, folklore, history and literature.

For anyone wishing to travel closer to home, those choices are no less colourful. If you've enjoyed historian Lucy Worsley's recent book *Agatha*

Christie, how about following in the footsteps of the queen of crime? The *Agatha Christie Tour on the English Riviera* promises lunch by the waves at the glorious Art Deco hotel on Burgh Island; a visit to Christie's tranquil, atmospheric summer home,



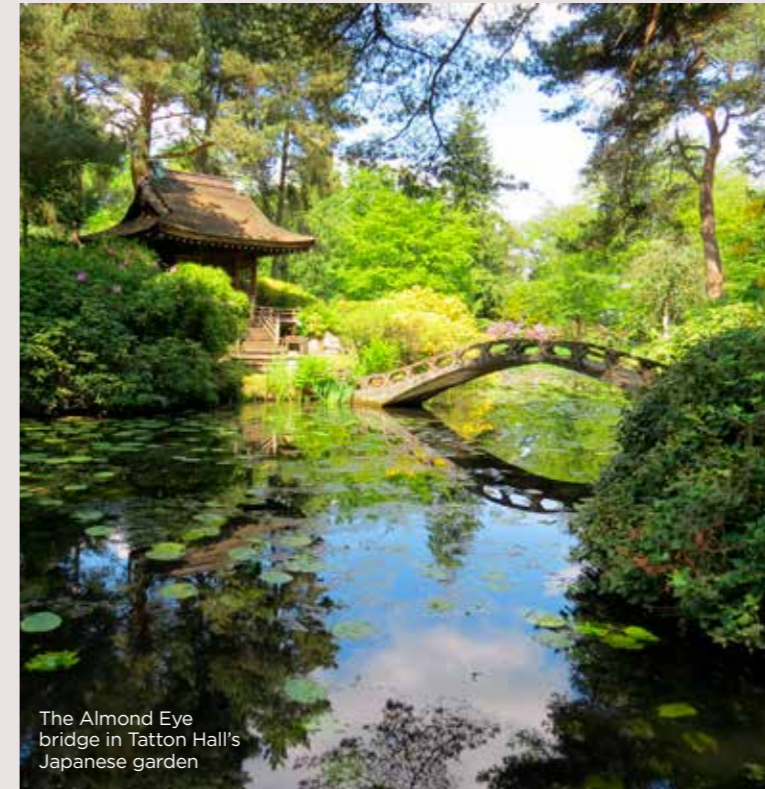
Burgh Island, Devon

SHUTTERSTOCK

THREE NEW TOURS FOR 2023...

CHESHIRE'S TREASURE HOUSES

Spend a few nights away in July on a very special tour of some of Cheshire's dazzling country houses. With exclusive access to beautiful privately owned properties, and highly informative visits to sites such as Tatton Hall, your tour will be enriched by the expertise of your guide, Arts Society Lecturer Nicholas Merchant.



The Almond Eye bridge in Tatton Hall's Japanese garden

TREASURES OF PARMA AND MODENA TOUR

Head to Italy to immerse yourself in one of the country's richest areas when it comes to art and architecture. Visit beautiful ancient churches, art galleries, a historic library and Fontanellato's 15th-century castle. Art historian and Arts Society Lecturer Clare Ford-Wille will be your expert guide.

ALTERNATIVE ALGARVE

Culture and cuisine are inextricably linked. Dishes passed down through generations speak of more than family history; they are about cultural identity too. On the *Authentic Algarve Tour* you can experience tours and tastings, discovering the stories of local cuisine, with special walking trails an additional bonus to get you off the beaten track into beautiful countryside.

SHUTTERSTOCK

Greenway, on the River Dart; and the fun of a murder mystery evening in Torquay. Looking further afield, you can take the chance to explore an 'unknown' Greece. The *Lakes of Northern Greece Tour* is an opportunity to discover the lands that lie away from the famous coastline and islands. Expect stunning scenery, delicious regional dishes and unusual fauna and wildlife. Or perhaps a cultural break in Tuscany, taking in the beautiful Renaissance city of Lucca and the joys of Florence and Siena, is the one for you? Called the *Andrea Bocelli Tour in Tuscany*, this break includes the 18th edition of the singer's hosted

show in his home town of Lajatico, where he will perform alongside a cast of international artists. Each of Travel Editions' tours is the result of meticulous planning, so you can be confident that all you have to do is relax and enjoy your journey of discovery.



Sunset at the Prespes Lakes, northern Greece

'EACH OF ITS TOURS HAS AN EXPERT GUIDE ON HAND, MAKING EVERY HOLIDAY A TRULY MEMORABLE, INSPIRING EXPERIENCE'



FIND OUT MORE

Travel Editions has been working with The Arts Society since 1994. To find out more, call 020 7251 0045 or email tours@traveleditions.co.uk for the latest brochure, or visit traveleditions.co.uk



SPECIAL COURSES

Study Days, courses and events from The Arts Society

GREATER LONDON

**Wilde about Oscar:
famous for being
famous (and infamous)**

16 MAR, 10.45AM-3PM

Tutor: [Simon Whitehouse](#)

This three-lecture Study Day traces the life and times of Oscar Wilde, from his Irish roots, through Oxford University, bohemian 1890s Chelsea, public acclaim and the ignominy of trial and imprisonment in Reading Gaol.

The Concert
Artistes' Association,
20 Bedford Street
£38

E: amh@bandahoward.co.uk
Tickets: tinyurl.com/pnyeatfv

**Convention and
challenges: but when
is it art?**

3 AND 24 APR
11AM-3.30PM

[A different topic and
tutor for each day](#)

This Study Day will look at ideas that may not have been accepted as 'art' at conception. It explores areas such as cave art, art by outsiders, street art, cartoons and art once derided, but now a part of life.

**The Art Workers' Guild,
6 Queen Square,
Bloomsbury**

Price depends on whether attending whole course or individual days
E: suecolinmills@yahoo.co.uk



Right: *The Baptism of Christ*, 1450, by Piero della Francesca

GREATER LONDON

**THE HISTORY OF TREES IN ART,
FROM GIOTTO TO KLIMT**

9 JUN, 10.45AM-3.30PM

Tutor: [Clare Ford-Wille](#)

Throughout the history of European art, the tree has been of importance as a punctuation mark within a composition. It creates perspective, draws attention, offers a framework, or gives meaning to the subject of the painting or sculpture. Dead or broken trees can symbolise death; a living tree can indicate everlasting life or resurrection; and in the Garden of Eden the Tree of Knowledge is crucial to the fall of Adam and Eve. This Study Day will explore the myriad ways artists, such as Piero della Francesca or Constable, use trees in their work.

[The Linnean Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly](#)
£38

E: shahida0450@yahoo.com



These events are just a taster of those on offer: book the latest on our Society and Area sites. For more, see theartsociety.org/study-days-and-courses or call 020 7430 0730

The cultural heritage of the Huguenots

18 APR, 10.45AM-3PM

Tutor: [Sue Jackson](#)

The Huguenots came to England in vast numbers in the late 17th century, bringing a variety of skills. This Study Day will examine the legacy and impact of those craftspeople on consumers and society.

The Concert

Artistes' Association,
20 Bedford Street

£38

E: amh@bandahoward.co.uk

Tickets: tinyurl.com/yuxp28nm

Beyond the surface

21 APR, 5 MAY AND
16 JUN, 10.30AM-3.15PM

Tutor: [Dr Margaret Knight](#)

Three Study Days, each taking a single, famous image as their starting point, exploring what that image reveals about the artist, the times in which the image was made, and the significance of their subject matter.

Society of Antiquaries,
Burlington House,
Piccadilly

£35 single day;
£90 whole course
E: jenny.mulholland@live.com

The art, history and culture of Ukraine

10 MAY, 10.45AM-3.30PM

Tutor: [Dr Rosamund Bartlett](#)

This day of lectures tells the multifaceted Ukrainian story through the shared culture that binds its diverse people together. Areas covered range from the sacred art inherited from Byzantium to the country's richly decorative folk traditions, set in a historical context.

The Linnean Society,
Burlington House,

Piccadilly

£38

E: psavours@gmail.com

EAST SURREY

Sitkovetsky Trio and friends

13 MAY, 6-9PM

Tutor: [Katy Hamilton with the Sitkovetsky Trio and friends](#)

The Arts Society East Surrey Area, in partnership with the Surrey Hills



ESSEX

THE SEINE, RIVER OF LIGHT, ARTISTS' DELIGHT AND HOME TO IMPRESSIONISM

24 APR, 10AM-2.30PM

Tutor: [Carole Petipher](#)

The Seine – often called ‘the river of light’ – was a major influence on the development of Impressionism. Seen here is Claude Monet’s take on it, in his *Argenteuil*, c.1872–5. This Study Day takes the form of a travelogue, with the work of the Impressionists at its core. It will follow the course of the river, starting at the estuary, where it all began with open-air painting, tracking the rise to recognition of this new wave of artists, and introducing little-known facts about them, featuring their art and exploits.

Little Baddow Memorial Hall, Chelmsford

£38 (including morning coffee and a light lunch with wine and soft drinks)

E: meganbashir@gmail.com



JULIA SEVERINSEN

International Music Festival, offers its members and friends a concert and talk for the festive finale. The evening starts with a talk by Katy Hamilton, covering the historical context and musical detail of the evening's programme, with live music from

the Trio (left). Enjoy a complimentary drink and a stroll in The Menuhin Hall's beautiful grounds during the interval. The concert follows with the Trio performing Beethoven's *Ghost*. They will then be joined by two of The Menuhin School students

to perform Dvorak's *Piano Quintet No 2*.

The Menuhin Hall,
Cobham Road, Stoke
D'Abernon, Great
Bookham, Cobham
£40 talk and concert (inc
drink); £36 concert only
E: esaartssociety2020@gmail.com

Over the seas

From discovering hidden sea lochs to sailing the majestic Caledonian Canal, adventures lie ahead on board *Lord of the Highlands*, one of Hebridean Island Cruises' most beautiful ships

Artists, poets and writers have long travelled to Scotland, drawn to its breathtaking scenery, spectacular gardens and rich history. Painters of the nation's landscape, including Alexander Runciman, Alexander Nasmyth, William McTaggart and Joan Eardley, have all contributed to the world's view of Scotland as a land of rugged terrain and arresting beauty. That fascination with all the country has to offer is something Hebridean Island Cruises truly understands. This year it has a series of curated cruises planned that offer explorers a magical, carefree way to discover more about the stories and sights of locations along the nation's waterways.

You'll sail on board *Lord of the Highlands*, a sleek, stylish ship custom-built to glide through the 29 locks of the famous Caledonian

Canal. Each tour is all-inclusive, where everything is included, from tours ashore to delicious dining. As a trusted Arts Society travel affiliate, Hebridean Island Cruises prides itself on creating a particularly warm welcome, exemplary personal service and, with a guest list of no more than 38, the opportunity to get to know your fellow travellers in a relaxed atmosphere.

On specially themed cruises, you'll benefit from expert lecturers and guides, whose knowledge of the sites you visit will heighten your understanding of the history behind them. Learn more about the tale of Prince Charles Edward Stuart (Bonnie Prince Charlie) and the Jacobites, while enjoying the *On the Jacobite Trail* tour with author and expert Steve Lord. Discover fascinating details about



Glenfinnan Viaduct



Lord of the Highlands



Loch Linnhe

'PAINTERS OF THE NATION'S LANDSCAPE HAVE ALL CONTRIBUTED TO THE WORLD'S VIEW OF SCOTLAND AS A LAND OF RUGGED TERRAIN AND ARRESTING BEAUTY'

the gardens of the Highlands with Professor Stefan Buczacki, one of the UK's best-known gardening and natural history authors and broadcasters. And, on cruises with a focus on rambling, take in the soaring sights as you walk the Great Glen, accompanied by experienced guides. All these engaging shore visits will bring the sites you visit alive. As a member of The Arts Society, there is also a special saving of 5% on each *Lord of the Highlands* cruise. What better incentive to set sail and enjoy the chance to soak up the heritage and culture of this, one of the most beautiful places in the world.



SPECIAL MEMBER DISCOUNT
Members of The Arts Society benefit from a 5% saving on any *Lord of the Highlands* tour. To book, visit hebridean.co.uk or call 01756 704704



Glenfinnan Monument

LEAVING PORT

These are just two of the cruises for 2023



ON THE JACOBITE TRAIL

From Kyle of Lochalsh to Inverness, this cruise promises a chance to explore the Highlands and Islands and locations forever affiliated with the story of Bonnie Prince Charlie and the Jacobites. You'll retrace the prince's steps, see where he raised his standard, sail over the sea to

the Isles of Skye and Raasay and on, to the site of that rawest of battles, Culloden, in 1746. You'll cruise the Caledonian Canal and transit Neptune's Staircase (above) on what promises to be a truly memorable cruise, with each day closing with relaxing in like-minded company.



SCENIC SCOTLAND

If you've always wanted to visit the Isles of Mull and Iona (above), the five-night *Scenic Scotland* cruise is the one for you. You'll sail gently in style from Oban, traversing beautiful sea lochs and the four aqueducts and 29 locks of the mighty Caledonian Canal, which opened

in 1822. On board you'll experience the utmost comfort, while onshore experiences include a visit to one of the oldest distilleries in Scotland, Oban Distillery, and later, after lunch on board while you sail to Mull, a tour of Duart Castle, seat of the Clan Maclean for over 700 years.

YOUR SOCIETIES

News from just some of our 367 Arts Societies

FROM OUR CHAIR

Liz Woods



The invitation to write this column came when I was in Agra having just seen the Taj Mahal for the first time. My trip to India had been planned in 2019 and was put back twice. I found

it inspirational, after so much 'sameness', to immerse myself in a different culture. Now I'm back I realise how much I needed the change.

Observing the simple, dignified lives of many of the people we met was a reminder that it's easy to get caught up in what Wordsworth called 'the getting and spending'; that we can get out of tune with the things that really matter. One of the wonderful things about being a member of The Arts Society is the opportunity to be regularly reminded that some things are beyond price. Comradeship, shared interests, friends, learning about the arts and reading good books are the things that keep me happy. The other element that enriches my life is volunteering – and the more I put into it, both for The Arts Society and elsewhere, the more I get out of it. I meet new people, learn fresh skills and, long after having retired, still feel valued and valuable. In Delhi I met an 83-year-old lady who goes every day to fold sheets at the Dhobi Ghat, where countless piles of laundry are washed as they have been for centuries. 'Why do you still come?' we asked her. She said that she lives comfortably with her family but comes to feel useful, to be with her friends and to keep in touch with life. I can relate to that. We're still learning the lessons of the pandemic; one of the positive things it has done for us is to give us pause. It's been an opportunity to re-examine our priorities, decide what's important and hopefully to realise, as Wordsworth suggests, that looking at a thing of beauty will make us feel less forlorn. Belonging to The Arts Society can do that too.



BAGS OF GOOD IDEAS

Two initiatives aimed at increasing engagement between young people and art were rolled out last year, both revolving around the idea of bags. **The Arts Society Bath**, working in partnership with The Patricia Fay Memorial Fund, awarded £6,000 to a project at the Royal United Hospitals Bath. Art in a Bag does what it says on the tin: providing patients on the children's ward with a sack of crayons, modelling clay, worksheets and links to video masterclasses produced by artists. One parent said, '[My child's] initial experience in hospital was traumatic and resulted in anxiety. She really enjoyed using [the bag] and found using the modelling clay calming and relaxing.' Meanwhile, the three Arts Societies in Chichester – **Chichester, City of Chichester** and **Chichester Lavant Valley** – joined to produce sensory bags for Pallant House Gallery. Also funded in part by The Patricia Fay Memorial Fund, the bags contain objects that will boost youngsters' interest in the gallery, such as colourful plastic filters and magnifying glasses.

WORDS: CIARAN SNEEDON



ON THE TRAIL

The **Arts Society Dukeries** has created a new trail of discovery in Tickhill, Doncaster. Both the town's primary schools contributed to and benefited from the trail, which includes questions and facts about local buildings and landmarks. Anyone can take part, and the society has put up QR codes on posters throughout Tickhill.



TURNING A NEW PAGE

Volunteers from the **Wessex Area** are leading the way on a conservation project at St Giles House in Wessex. Since March 2015, members of Arts Societies from across the area have been working to help record and preserve the archive of more than 8,000 books at the property, some of which date to the 15th century. Volunteers have so far repaired, treated and organised around 7,000 books from the collection. The house is owned by the 12th Earl of Shaftesbury, who inherited it in 2015, and he requested assistance from local Societies for this work. Of particular interest are the collections of the 3rd and 7th earls, who accrued vast libraries. Covid-19 meant the

conservators had to pause activity for much of the past three years, but are now back in action. Meeting at least once a week, they dust, remove waste, repair bindings, treat leather, record key details about the books and input data into a new database for future researchers. Societies currently involved are **Wimborne and Blandford, Wyllye Valley** and **Kington Langley**. Shane Johnstone, a heritage volunteer involved in the project, says, 'I get a huge amount of pleasure to see a dusty and damaged book coming alive after careful repair and protective work. Many of the books give an insight into the past lives of significant members of the Shaftesbury family.'



SHUTTERSTOCK

THREE AWARD WINNERS

The **Arts Society West Mercia Area** has once again supported Koestler Arts, which helps detainees, secure patients and ex-offenders express themselves creatively through making art. Mark, who is currently serving a sentence at HM Prison Oakwood in Staffordshire, was awarded the highly commended prize for pastel, while Duane at HM Prison Stafford and an unnamed artist at HM Prison Featherstone were recognised for their portrait and drawing pieces respectively. The three West Mercia honourees also had their work displayed at the annual Koestler Awards exhibition, now in its 60th year, after their artworks had caught the eye of guest curator Ai Weiwei.

PLASTIC ART

The **Arts Society Beaconsfield** has overseen the creation of a sculpture made of plastic bottles. Twenty-six GCSE art students at Beaconsfield High School, supported by volunteers and sculptor Debs Hoy, used Dale Chihuly's V&A Museum chandelier as the inspiration for the piece, and there was an emphasis on the intersection between the arts, science and maths throughout the creative process. The project received £250 from The Arts Society's Community Grants and the chandelier is now on display at the school.





CELEBRATING ARTS WEEK

Ann Tompkin, the arts committee volunteer for **The Arts Society Reigate**, spent time during Arts Week 2022 at St Matthew's Primary School in Redhill. There, she witnessed workshops run by Magic Lantern, which had been sponsored by the Society. Magic Lantern is a charity that uses interactive sessions to tell the story of important artists and their creations. The 2022 theme was celebrating diversity, and 400 children and teachers were able to explore how artists from all backgrounds had overcome personal challenges to produce their art, including Jackson Pollock, Benode Behari Mukherjee and Althea McNish. Participants then created their own pieces (as above) in response to the artists they had studied.

CRAFTING AT HOME

A group of young people with visual impairments enjoyed an afternoon of arts and crafts, courtesy of **The Arts Society Thames Estuary**. Working with Southend in Sight, a local charity helping visually impaired and blind people in the community, the Society provided 25 art packs for local children to use at home. Funds for the initiative were raised through two coffee mornings hosted by committee members.

IN BRIEF

STITCH IN TIME

The Arts Society Bath, in addition to its art bag project (see page 58), has also been working with elderly patients at the Royal United Hospital. It donated £250 to the Stitch in Time initiative, which provides hospital residents with materials for art projects. One beneficiary said, 'It really made my day. It made me feel useful, and it brightened up my day.'



CONGRATULATIONS TO...

...**The Arts Society High Weald**, which celebrated its 25th anniversary last September. It marked the occasion by presenting a painting by one of the Society's members to the trustees of the village hall in Benenden, which has been used as a venue for the Society from the very beginning.

AND ALSO TO...

...**The Arts Society West Suffolk** on its 50th anniversary, which was marked in 2022 in an outdoor event in the walled garden at Euston Hall, home of the Society's President, the Duchess of Grafton.



Pictured here in front of the mural is arts volunteer Jane Varrall from the Society

HUNDREDS OF HIGH FIVES

A mural at Sun Hill Junior School in New Alresford was officially unveiled last October following a months-long creative process. The painting has added a touch of vibrancy to a 12m-long wall that had previously been undecorated. Supported by **The Arts Society Alresford**, the project was truly hands-on: the handprint of every child and member of staff at the school can be found on the wall, and space has been left for future generations to make their mark too.

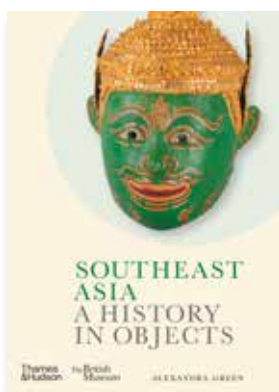


SHARE YOUR NEWS!

The deadline for the next issue is **27 March**. Send to magazine@theartsociety.org. Only a selection can be featured and the editor reserves the right to edit content.

GOOD
READS*Our pick of the latest arts and culture reads***SOUTHEAST ASIA: A HISTORY IN OBJECTS***Alexandra Green*

(Thames & Hudson and The British Museum, £32)



In seven chapters this book offers a deep dive into the story of Southeast Asia, told through a selection of fascinating art objects and cultural artefacts from The British Museum. Through these we learn of the history, from Neolithic Age to now, of the two distinct parts of what make up the concept of Southeast Asia, from the mainland, where you find Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, to the island region of Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, East Timor and the Philippines. With such diversity of countries, beliefs and communities – from urban cities to hunter-gatherer settlements – come the pieces that truly tell the stories, from past to

present, of the peoples. Beautifully illustrated, this book features more than 400 objects, chosen to represent particular parts of the complex story of this part of the world, from the early emergence of agricultural communities to the time of colonial rule and on to the fight for independence. Placed in the spotlight, one of the earliest pieces is a Lingling-o – a form of double-headed slit earring made of valuable stone, metal or shell, from about 500 BC. So heavy in appearance, their wearer, surely, must have had truly fleshy lobes. Expect, too, exquisite woven pieces from the 19th century, which take the art of basketry to new levels, and clever shadow puppets from the late 1700s, representing gods, heroes or clowns. There are the stories of miniature, intricate models of musical instruments, vernacular buildings and even tiny boats created entirely of cloves, made for hundreds of years as souvenirs. For followers of textiles, see the beautiful batik cloths and Timor textiles selected. Note, too, the inclusion of precious ceramics from Vietnam, which tell the tale of the take-up of Chinese knowledge in pottery manufacture, during times of Chinese occupation from eras as distant as 111 BC. Authored by the museum's Henry Ginsburg curator for Southeast Asia, Alexandra Green, this new publication is a reminder, if one was needed, of the vibrant creativity of the people of this part of our world.

**The Story of Art Without Men**

Katy Hessel

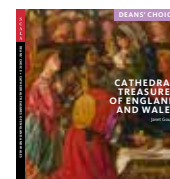
(Cornerstone, £30)

If you haven't picked up a copy yet, this recent publication, named Waterstones Book of the Year at the close of 2022, is a fascinating read that challenges the canon of art to date. Hessel is an art historian, presenter and curator who is also behind @thegreatwomenartists on Instagram and the podcast of the same name. The book's title says it all.

Deans' Choice:**Cathedral Treasures of England and Wales**

Janet Gough

(Scala, £14.95)



A beautifully illustrated new volume revealing the stories behind 50 precious artefacts in cathedrals across England and Wales. From an Anglo-Saxon portable sundial to oils by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Arts Society Lecturer Janet Gough winks out the stories behind the treasures. For more, see our 'Become an instant expert...' story online in April, when Janet enlarges on this theme.

**Paula Modersohn-Becker:****A Life in Art**

Uwe M Schneede

(Thames & Hudson, £25)

If a visit to the Royal Academy's recent show *Making Modernism*, which focused on four female artists in Germany in the early 1900s, inspired, then this is a must-read. It is the story of one of those artists, Paula Modersohn-Becker, who died aged just 31. In her short life she produced over 700 paintings and some 1,500 works on paper. Schneede's accessible book gives insight into the life behind the compelling works.

SPECIAL OFFERS

BENEFITS, DISCOUNTS AND TREATS FOR MEMBERS
AND SUPPORTERS OF THE ARTS SOCIETY

FREE TICKETS

THE PETWORTH PARK ANTIQUES & FINE ART FAIR

Your ticket to this renowned fair, staged in the 'Capability' Brown deer park of the National Trust's Petworth House in Sussex, will also give you free entry to the house. Sixty-plus exhibitors will be displaying beautiful – and intriguing – pieces for sale in the fair.

Among those expect a Han Dynasty Sichuan

terracotta dancer, fine oil paintings, campaign furniture, Gallé glass, ceramics, silver, watches and jewellery. Pictured here is *The Goose Girl* by William Lee-Hankey.



• **Tickets are £10 each, but will be free to the first 25 readers to email as@adfl.co.uk. The fair runs from 19–21 May; petworthparkfair.com**

30% OFF...

...A NEW ARTS BOOK

In the history of art, tales of *avant-garde* styles brought to fresh shores by artist émigrés are a constant. This new book – *Surrealists in New York* by Charles Darwent – takes one such story as its focus. A group biography, it explores how artists (male and female) fleeing war-torn France of World War II brought Surrealism to America. In doing so, they shifted the centre of the art world from Paris to New York. In addition, their art deeply influenced the work of figures such as Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko – a fact too long written out of art history.

• **Visit thamesandhudson.com for 30% off the book (RRP £25), entering the code 'Darwent30' at checkout; this offer is valid from 16 March 2023.**



20% OFF...

...A BOOK ABOUT POTTERY

With television programmes such as *The Great Pottery Throw Down* raising awareness of the skill and art of working with clay, here comes a book all about

making mealtimes more elegant. *Design and Create Contemporary Tableware: Making Pottery You Can Use* is a publication both useful and beautiful. Penned by two leading figures in the world of contemporary ceramics, Linda Bloomfield and Sue Pryke (the latter a recent judge on the programme), this is a book to inspire anyone to enter a studio, get hands on and create their own stylish wares for the table.

• **Receive 20% off (RRP £27) by using the code 'ArtsSociety1' at checkout at bloomsbury.com; offer valid from 28 February–31 March.**



50% DISCOUNT

THE SPRING DECORATIVE FAIR

One of the most beautiful events in spring – and popular with interior designers – *The Decorative Fair* in London's Battersea Park opens again this May. Over 150 specialist dealers will be selling antiques, fine and decorative art and 20th-century design. With a theme of the garden, pieces for your outside spaces will be to the fore, from garden statuary to furniture and decorative works.

• ***The Decorative Fair* runs from 9–14 May. Members can enjoy a 50% discount on tickets (usual price £10) from 10–14 May, when purchasing at decorativefair.com/spring-fair; enter the code 'TAS50' (please note: entry is free after 4pm).**





Left: *Triangles*, 2021, made from denim, corduroy and cotton, by Marlene Bennett Jones
 Below: *Housetop*, c.1945, by Martha Jane Pettway, made from corduroy

7 FASCINATING FACTS ABOUT...

The Gee's Bend quilters

Who makes the Gee's Bend quilts and what is their story? *Sue Herdman* reveals the key facts

1 Gee's Bend (official name 'Boykin') lies on a deep curve of the Alabama River in the state of the same name in the Deep South of America, in an area known as Wilcox County. The name 'Gee' was that of the former white owner of the land.

2 The story of the Gee's Bend quilters began in the 19th century, when the enslaved women of this isolated rural spot started making quilts from what was at hand, to keep their families warm. They passed their skills down through generations, stitching their stories into their quilts. There are still quilters in Gee's Bend descended directly from those enslaved people.

3 In the 1960s, during the civil rights movement, the population in this area of Wilcox County was about 80% African American, with almost 60% with an income below the poverty line. On 26 March 1966, in response to acute economic decline in the area, local women came together, forming the Freedom Quilting Bee, to work as a cooperative and gain economic independence. The group continued until 2012, producing both traditional well-known patterns and more free-form pieces, in which the maker's imagination takes flight.

4 There has been debate about whether the Gee's

Bend quilts should be called art, craft or folk art. Some refer to the quilts as 'outsider' art, a genre that is both 'vernacular' and 'self-taught'. What is certain is each example, with its pattern and colour, possesses a highly original beauty, imbued with the individuality of its maker. These quilts are a form of 'slow' sustainable art. Each element in a Gee's Bend quilt has been used before and, when a quilt has come to the end of its life, its fabric is almost certainly used again as padding for a new quilt.

5 Such were - and are - the expressive qualities of the quilts that, from 1966, when they were first placed in a special Manhattan auction to benefit the quilters and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, they gained attention from the arts world.

6 One notable bidder at that auction was the designer

Ray Eames. An early collector was also Lee Krasner, the Abstract Expressionist artist who was married to Jackson Pollock. She described the quilts as 'magnificent'. Another purchaser with a keen eye for quality was Diana Vreeland, editor of *Vogue*.

7 Examples of Gee's Bend quilts have been exhibited in major American arts venues, but were only shown for the first time in the UK at Turner Contemporary in Margate in 2020. This spring there will be another chance to view examples of these quilts, alongside other artworks from African-American artists from the Deep South, in an exhibition at the Royal Academy.

SEE

Souls Grown Deep like the Rivers: Black Artists from the American South; Royal Academy, London; 17 March-18 June; royalacademy.org.uk

