

PROGRAMME

2019/2020



7 OCTOBER - BEHIND THE SMILE: THE STORY OF THE MONA LISA

One of the most iconic paintings in Western art. Painted by Leonardo da Vinci in 1507, it accompanied him to France in 1517, and eventually to the Louvre. Why did Leonardo keep this painting until his death? What is its place in the history of portraiture? And when did the Mona Lisa become an international celebrity? This lecture looks at the reasons for her fame, and, incidentally, why she is smiling! *Paula Nuttall*

4 NOVEMBER - GYPSIES, TRAMPS & THIEVES: THE REPRESENTATION OF THE WORKING CLASSES IN ART

This lecture looks at ordinary working people, skilled and unskilled workers in both urban and agricultural environments: craftsmen, artisans, shopkeepers, domestic servants, entertainers, prostitutes, beggars, paupers, slaves. For centuries in Western Art they were there as background, mute observers or for comic relief. But as the world changes, so does Art. This lecture will look at the move of low life subject matter from the despised and vulgar fringes of popular taste into the respectable mainstream and out again into political radicalism and avant-garde edginess. *Linda Smith*

2 DECEMBER - JANE AUSTEN'S CHRISTMAS: THE FESTIVE SEASON IN THE GEORGIAN ERA

Before the Victorians reinvented it, Christmas was a very different affair. With no Christmas trees, Father Christmas or commercialisation, the emphasis was on gentility, tradition and sociability. We will look at the balls, parties, games, traditions and celebrations, some familiar from Jane Austen's novels, through letters, paintings and engravings that will bring Georgian Christmases to life. *Dr Claire Walsh*

6 JANUARY - THE TWO GUSTAVS: MAHLER AND KLIMT

Gustav Klimt and his colleagues broke from the imperially endorsed art institutions of Vienna in 1897 and founded the Secession. That same year, Gustav Mahler took charge of the Vienna Opera House. Both Gustavs proved brilliant but troublesome in their pursuit of utopia through Art. This lecture places them in context, asking what fundamentally links and divides them. *Gavin Plumley*

3 FEBRUARY - CLARA, RHINO SUPERSTAR AND WONDER OF THE GRAND TOUR

Brought up as a pet by a director of the Dutch East India Company, Clara was shipped to Holland in 1741 and spent nearly 20 years touring Europe as one of the wonders of the age. She visited most of the courts of Europe including that

of Louis XV and eventually died in London in 1758. She was recorded in paintings, prints, bronze, clocks and even hairstyles! This lecture explores the charming story of this magnificent beast, only the third or fourth rhino to be seen in Europe, through contemporary records and works of art. *Clive Stewart-Lockhart*

2 MARCH - GEORGE STUBBS AND THE TYRANTS OF THE JUNGLE

In his own lifetime, Stubbs was as famous for his lions as his horses. He combined scientific enquiry, truthfulness to nature and extraordinary technical skill and patience to produce sometimes endearing, sometimes terrifying images of wild animals. He worked with the leading zoologists of his day to make portraits of such exotic species as moose, kangaroo and yak. He got to know the lions, tigers and leopards of London's menageries. An obsessive experimenter, he invented new techniques in oil, enamel and print to capture their playful charm and fearful symmetry. *Amina Wright*

6 APRIL - ENGLISH WOMEN AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Early in the French Revolution, English women of letters visit Paris. Some stay there. Mary Wollstonecraft is there for the execution of Louis XVI. Grace Dalrymple hides the governor of the Tuileries Palace between two mattresses in her own bed, and stays in the bed for four hours while her apartment is searched. Painted by Gainsborough, her portrait is in the Frick Museum, New York. Fanny Burney, Hannah Moore and Helen Maria Williams are among others and we shall see their portraits by contemporary French artists such as Louis-Leopold Boilly and Jean-Baptiste Lesueur. *Karin Fernal*

11 MAY - BEETHOVEN AT 250

To mark the 250th Anniversary of Beethoven's birth, Sandy guides us through the life of this brilliant, cantankerous visionary and astonishingly original composer, a man who tore up the rule book of classical music. With visual images and examples of his music, Sandy will show us why Beethoven described himself as a 'poet in sound'. *Sandy Burnett*

1 JUNE - SUNKEN TREASURES OF THE EAST: TALES OF CHINESE SHIPWRECK PORCELAIN

Oriental blue-and-white porcelain has its own rich history of shipwrecks and lost cargoes that hint at the fascination of the West for these products. The lecture will tell the history of blue-and-white porcelain and the trade in export porcelain, including accounts of salvaging operations that recovered cargoes that have greatly enhanced the understanding of blue-and-white porcelain and its wider commercial impact. *Professor Marie Conte-Helm*