

PROGRAMME of our ACTIVITIES 2025/26



The Age of Walnut
Janusz Karczewski-Słowikowski

19
MARCH

16
APRIL

Saints, Sinners
and Scoundrels
Antonia Keaney

The Elizabethans loved walnut for fashionable furniture and it continued to be used well into the 18th century. Stylistically, 1660–1740 spans the Restoration, William and Mary, Queen Anne, and Baroque styles. Furniture transitioned from framed panel joinery to the dovetailed work of cabinetmakers, with stunning decoration using veneering, parquetry and marquetry.

Decorous conduct has not always been observed by some members of the Marlborough family, who could even put the Bridgertons to shame! We meet some of the more colourful characters from Blenheim's past. The Georgian era was one where the Ton (the who's-who of British high society during the Regency era) turned a blind eye to shenanigans so long as they were discreet.

The Echoing Scream
Gavin Plumley

18
SEPTEMBER

16
OCTOBER

The Life and Work
of Isabella d'Este
Sarah Dunant

How Modernism became
a Cold War Secret Agent
James Vaux

21
MAY

18
JUNE

The Art of Image and
Presentation
Gary Italiaander

The Birth of Expressionism. Gavin explores the universal aftershocks of Munch's 1893 painting *The Scream* — in art, music, literature, dance and film. While tracing the origins of Expressionism, he examines the work of artists and thinkers like Kandinsky, Klee, Schiele, Nietzsche, Freud, and Schoenberg, showing how they reflected and ignited our inner lives.

In a world where women had little power, Isabella D'Este (1474–1539) became one of the first great female patrons and art collectors of the Renaissance. Her court in Mantua was filled with fine writers and poets. Her letters reveal a clever and educated woman who had an eye for art as well as fashion.

This lecture explores how the USA covertly used Modernist design and Abstract Expressionism as Cold War tools against the Soviet Bloc in the 1950s. It examines how America's new artists were unwittingly used by the CIA and how mid-century modern design showcased American cultural superiority.

Gary displays and talks through a selection of amazing images that have influenced his work as a photographer. Many of the images discussed during the presentation will be familiar, but you may not know who took them!

Hark the Herald
Angels in Art
Sarah Burles

20
NOVEMBER

11
DECEMBER

The History of the
English Christmas Carol
Peter Medhurst

SPECIAL
INTEREST
DAY

6
NOV

SPECIAL
INTEREST
DAY

30
APR

In Christian iconography, angels have been depicted in many ways. Leonardo da Vinci gave Gabriel bird-like wings, while Raphael imagined his angels as toddlers. Van Eyck's angels sing and play instruments, whereas William Blake envisages phantoms in his pictures and poetry. In this lecture, Sarah explores images of heavenly beings across religions and centuries.

Peter traces the development of the English Christmas Carol through seven centuries. He explores the intriguing stories behind a number of them. Carols examined will include *Angelus* and *Virginem*, *God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen*, *Christians Awake*, *Hark the Herald Angels Sing* and *Adeste Fideles*.

Changing Art, Changing Society
and Finding Success: Van Gogh,
Cezanne and Hogarth
Julia Musgrave

Julia will explain how stubbornness connects these three artists. Van Gogh and Cezanne had little success during their lives, but became successful posthumously, making them very influential in the early 20th century. Hogarth changed British art in an earlier period when he used his unique narrative style to wage war on London's sex trade and child poverty.

18th century English
Porcelain
Jane Gardiner

Jane will be describing early experiments into porcelain-making in the 18th Century and how porcelain was both displayed and used. The first two lectures will concentrate on the Chelsea, Bow, Derby and Worcester factories. The final lecture will describe how the fashion for porcelain figures grew.

Extended tour:
Malta 2026
Caroline Johnson

After a one-year break, extended tours will return in May 2026 with a six-day trip to Malta. Staying in Sliema, this trip will visit the main historical and cultural sites.

Norwegian Arts from Stave
Churches to Snohetta
Rosamund Bartlett

15
JANUARY

19
FEBRUARY

Dress code: Ten Iconic
Dresses in Art
Alexandra Epps

Norwegian arts have always had a close relationship with nature, and this lecture explores how Norway's geography inspired painters such as Edvard Munch, J. C. Dahl and Peder Balke. They have also inspired ultra-modern design and architectural practices, as adopted by the collective Snohetta, who designed the Oslo Opera House to look like an iceberg you can walk on.

Alexandra explores iconic dresses depicted in ten famous portraits from the 19th and 20th centuries, which shocked and delighted audiences. We study a range of different dresses, from Sargent's scandalous little black dress to Klimt's golden gowns and the drapery of Leighton's *Flaming June*. As every picture tells a story, so does every dress!

Our lectures are held on
Thursday mornings at **10.45am**,
repeated at **1.30pm**.

For the venues, along with details of our study days
and trips, please refer to monthly bulletins or our
website at www.stradfas.org.uk.





NEWSLETTER & PROGRAMME 2025/26



Community Arts

Anne Maguire

Each year, in line with its charitable objects, STRADFAS donates money to arts-related projects in the community. This season, STRADFAS has sponsored two lectures at the Stratford Literary Festival and donated to their project to provide books for children without access to them at home. Donations have also been made to the Welcombe Hills School/Youth Hub and to the Friends of Stratford Hospital for a photographic work for their Community Hub.

Membership

Julie Pritchard

There are now over 400 members of STRADFAS, half of whom live in Stratford. The remainder live in the surrounding area, in towns such as Alcester, Evesham, Kenilworth, Banbury and Solihull plus smaller communities such as Claverdon, Kineton, Wellesbourne, Henley and Shipston.

We always welcome visitors to our lectures for a modest fee. If you come with a friend, do introduce them at the visitors' desk. Visitors often go on to become members. Each autumn, we hold a new members' coffee morning. This is an opportunity for new members to meet the committee informally, ask questions and learn more about our other activities. New members bring fresh perspectives.

Chairman's Report



When I took over as Chairman of STRADFAS in 2022, the world was recovering from the devastating effects of the global pandemic. As I write this valedictory note, the world is once again in turmoil. When individuals have very little or no control over external events, the role of the arts can become very important as balm for the soul, making life that little bit sweeter.

As a committee, we have endeavoured to offer an entertaining, informative and eclectic range of Lectures, Special Interest Days, Day Visits and Extended Tours, and I am very proud of and grateful to the colleagues I have worked with over the last three years. I would like to think that, in addition, we have enhanced the administrative processes underpinning our organisation and, of course, we have a super new website. I know that I am leaving STRADFAS in very capable hands with Tony Hughes and his team.

Caroline Johnson



Lecture on Art Deco by Clare Phillips

Lynne Hurst

This season saw our first ever sponsored lecture! Dazzling jewellery from the Art Deco period was the centrepiece of a display from Pragnell, who were sponsoring Clare Phillips' lecture on Art Deco Jewellery: A Modern Inspiration and a Real Originality.

Clare delighted the audience with her slides of beautiful jewellery and precious gems. Some strikingly original styles were shown, such as bandeau hair ornaments that could also be worn as bracelets. Members were encouraged to try on the pieces and, while doing so, to have fun socialising. A day to remember!

Day visits

Vicky McCarthy

Last November, 46 members of STRADFAS went on a day visit to the Van Gogh exhibition, Poets and Lovers, at the National Gallery in London. This fine show was of 61 pieces of the artist's work, at least 10 of which had not previously been on public display. As a complete contrast, our next day trip was to Malvern for a guided tour of Madresfield Court, a beautiful, moated house with a rich history, owned by the Lygon family for over 900 years.



Looking ahead to October, our final trip for 2025 will be to the Cartier Exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum. This promises to be a dazzling display of fabulous jewellery – a treat not to be missed!



Heritage Volunteers

Kay Anderson

The Heritage volunteers have accomplished a great variety of projects over the years, helping to preserve our heritage for future generations. These have included the meticulous care and repair of the gold work on ecclesiastical embroideries. We repaired vestments for the clergy. We supported local museums including the Shakespeare Birthplace, by making the Tudor dress and the Tudor doublet.

A new project is now underway working with friends of The Guild Chapel, where a replacement Altar Rug is required. The friends requested we use the cross as a motif for the centre piece, as illustrated, the idea being that sun, light and energy flow into the chapel through the cross. This inspirational design is by my granddaughter Jessica. My thanks go to the volunteers who helped me in so many ways during my years as your Heritage volunteer, it has been such a privilege and pleasure.