

The Arts Society North East Essex

Lecture Programme for 2020

Thursday morning, 16th January

Convents and Courtesans

Lecturer: Patsy Erskine- Hill

This lecture is based on extraordinary research showing how thousands of women were forced to enter convents against their will in order to save their families the cost of their dowries. This was matched by huge growth in the number and wealth of Venetian courtesans, who flourished in this distorted society and who were notorious throughout Europe.

Thursday morning, 13th February

Annual General Meeting

Repton and the Picturesque

Lecturer: James Bolton

The picturesque was the final phase of the English landscape movement. It was the landscape version of the Gothic novel. The aim was to engender, in reader and viewer, a pleasurable frisson of fear and alarm. Humphry Repton, who turned to landscape gardening in 1788, realised over a period of thirty years that the picturesque was all very well as theory, but what his clients actually required was practicality and, above all, beauty. Terraces, flower borders, shrubberies and sculptural ornaments set around country houses gradually became the formal gardens of the nineteenth century.

Thursday morning, 19th March

Field of the Cloth of Gold 500th Anniversary

Lecturer: Jo Mabbutt

2020 marks the 500th anniversary of this extraordinary event. In June 1520, the two handsome and accomplished Renaissance princes, Henry VIII and Francis I, meet to ratify an Anglo-French alliance and celebrate the betrothal of Henry's daughter Mary to the French Dauphin. Both have imperial ambitions and are eager to display themselves as magnificent warrior kings by putting on a sumptuous spectacle lasting 18 days. Furniture, tapestries, jewels and a chapel were imported to array a temporary palace in regal splendour. How was it all achieved? The logistics required to transport, feed and entertain the huge entourage were staggering, and the supply chain, supported by the City of London Guilds, is fascinating.

Thursday evening, 16th April

Making Visions. The jewellery of artist Charles Ricketts

Lecturer: Helen Ritchie

An in-depth look at the unique jewellery created by flamboyant artist Charles Ricketts at the turn of the 20th century. His intricate and richly-enamelled neo-Renaissance pieces were designed as gifts for his many friends, including May Morris and the fascinating couple known as Michael Field.

Thursday 21st May

The Skagen painters

Lecturer: Caroline Levisse

Skagen is located at the northernmost point of the Jutland peninsula in Denmark. From the 1870s to the beginning of the 20th century this fisherman's village was home to an artists' colony. Reacting against styles enforced by the academies and responding instead to the influence of French modernism, the artists painted fishermen at work, social gatherings and domestic scenes. They are especially renowned for their rendering of the distinctive light of long summer evenings, which gives their painting a romantic and lyrical quality.

Thursday evening, 18th June

The subtle science and exact art of colour in garden design

Lecturer: Timothy Walker

In 1888 Gertrude Jekyll wrote a short but seminal article in *The Garden* in which she urged the readers to 'remember that in a garden we are painting a picture'. As an accomplished watercolour artist, Miss Jekyll was familiar with the principles of arranging colours, but she felt that in gardens these principles 'had been greatly neglected'. This lecture looks at how the design of a garden border differs from that of a painting, and seeks to apply these principles of good garden design. Timothy also examines how the work of painters – Monet, Rothko and Hockney, for example – evolved in parallel with changing ideas about what a garden should look like.

Thursday morning, 24th September

Lecturer: Janet Gough

How to pick a favourite Church; and Cathedrals: safe places to do risky things

Janet Gough OBE, formerly the Director of Cathedrals and Church Buildings for the Church of England, has chosen 42 of her favourite churches, all from different dioceses, to illustrate the incredibly strong links between churches and the history of England over the last 1400 years. She will take us on a journey from an ancient Celtic mission church on the Essex marshes to a Crusaders' round church, via icing-sugar Gothic to a 2013 chapel inspired by Seamus Heaney. She will also suggest how each of us might select our own favourites.

Thursday morning, 15th October

The Roaring Twenties

Lecturer: Jo Banham

This lecture aims to conjure up the energy and originality of this decade. Following the dark days of the Great War, the Roaring Twenties were marked by novelty, modernity and huge social, technological and economic change. Its wealthy Bright Young Things were determined to shock; pursuing a life of hedonism and promiscuity, fuelled by champagne, cocaine, parties and jazz. The lecture will include many examples of the decade's most

innovative art and design. 100 years on, will the Twenties of our own century be very different?

Thursday morning, 19th November

Chinese imperial court costume and insignia of rank (1644-1911) Lecturer: David Rosier

This lecture gives a vivid and detailed insight into the way highly decorative and beautifully crafted costumes were used at the Chinese imperial court to denote the rank and status of the wearer. There will be a particular focus on the use of the dragon as an emblem of the emperor's power, together with the birds and animals which represented the ranks of civil and military officials. The focus will be on the Qing Dynasty but there will be contrasts with examples of imperial costume from the earlier Ming Dynasty.

Thursday morning, 3rd December

In the Kingdom of Sweets

Lecturer: Nigel Bates

The Nutcracker has delighted audiences at Christmas for many decades. It is hard to believe it was deemed a failure at its first performances. We take a close look at how this well-loved classic now takes its rightful place in the world of ballet, and how Tchaikovsky's music, the story-telling, design and dance, all come together to create the most magical escape for young and old alike.