



Newsletter 134 – June 2025

HEIRESS: SARGENT'S AMERICAN PORTRAITS EXHIBITION



*The exhibition in the Music Room and Green Room
© English Heritage*

We are delighted that the first major loan exhibition at Kenwood in 25 years has opened to widespread acclaim and local and national media coverage. 'Heiress, Sargent's American Portraits' is the fruit of a major collaboration between English Heritage and the Friends of Kenwood in which the Friends not only helped with funding and fundraising but also brought in curatorial advice and organisational, marketing, press, retail, translating and other skills.

English Heritage Senior Curator (South) Dr Wendy Monkhouse overcame considerable organisational and logistical obstacles within a compressed time-frame to deliver the exhibition, which included loans from major institutions and private lenders at home and the US. Staging the exhibition involved teams from across English Heritage including the vital registrar Becky Warner, conservation team Rachel Turnbull, Alice Tate-Harte and Sarah Lambarth, and exhibition historian Dr Susan Skedd, who researched the lives of Sargent's sitters and the socio-historical context.

Since it opened, the enthusiasm and expertise of the house operations team and of Kenwood's Volunteer cohort has been invaluable, we thank them all for their dedication and look forward to a continuing successful summer of visitors.

Curatorial adviser Richard Ormond, who has published widely on Sargent and is a council member of the Friends, gives below a flavour of the exhibition:

While standing in front of Sargent's portrait of Daisy Leiter at Kenwood, I remarked casually to curators Wendy Monkhouse and Louise Cooling: "Why don't we do an exhibition of his American heiresses". And so, many months later we have such an exhibition on the stocks. Gathering together the pictures and drawings, persuading the powers that be to give the exhibition the green light and then raising the large sums to pay for it, required the combined efforts of English Heritage staff and the Friends of Kenwood.

The infiltration of British society by wealthy Americans was a feature of the Gilded Age. The advent of passenger liners in the late 19th century made travel across the Atlantic speedy and comfortable. Attracted by the art and culture of the Old World, its history and traditions, Americans flocked to Europe, often for extended periods of time. A few, like the Sargent family, became expatriates who rarely went home.

The British aristocracy for their part, less influential and more impoverished, accepted and entertained their American visitors. Marriage was one inevitable result of social intercourse. Titles were a powerful lure for American parents while on the other side dollar dowries helped to overcome aristocratic prejudices and doubts.

By-and-large the American brides did well by the families into which they married, adapting themselves to a new culture and life-style and bringing fresh vitality to their role as social leaders. They actively participated in improving conditions in their local communities. They achieved all this while fulfilling the expectations of the age, in supporting their husbands. A few developed careers, like Mrs Wilton Phipps who served on the board of the London County Council, and Nancy Astor who became the first woman to take a seat in the House of Commons.

The paintings in the exhibition range from two masterly, deep-toned portraits of Mrs Wilton Phipps and Lady Playfair from the artist's early years in Paris to the full-blown splendour of full-length Pauline Astor and Daisy Leiter (Countess of Suffolk & Berkshire). The sitters display style and self-confidence in equal measure, at home in their fashionable dresses and accessories, chosen and artfully re-arranged by the artist, and in tune with their surroundings. Nancy Astor (Viscountess Astor) is positively skittish, arms behind her back as she gazes at us provocatively. Pauline Astor, with wrap and muff and a tiny

lapdog, stands majestically in an idealized sylvan landscape, painted in the style of Gainsborough and Reynolds, while she herself remains a modern young woman painted to the life.

Sargent gave up painting portraits in 1907, aged fifty-one, to the shock and amazement of fashionable society. He wanted to finish his big mural project in the Boston Public Library on the *Triumph of Religion*, and to paint subjects of his choosing. “I won’t paint you but I will draw you”, he told aspiring sitters. And so he began on a second extensive portrait gallery of the great and the good, completing 694 portrait drawings in charcoal before his death in 1925. Done in a single sitting, head-and-shoulders, measuring approximately 24 x 18 inches, they demonstrate the artist’s ability to hit off his sitters to the tee, with that force and panache for which he was famous.

In contrast to the portraits in oil, the charcoal heiresses are often older women, three drawn in their forties and two in their fifties. The titles resonate, the Duchess of Manchester, the Duchess of Marlborough, the Marchioness Curzon, the Countess of Ancaster, Viscountess Astor. It is a roll call of famous names and the American title-holders more than held their own. Sargent plays with poses, full-face, three-quarter face or profile; with settings, dark backgrounds or plain; with accessories, hats, wraps and jewellery. Sitters had to stand their ground as the portly artist thundered up and down the studio, making his mark before retiring to view the result. American heiresses did not flinch before this onslaught, revealing character as well as beauty in their interchange with the artist.

Richard Ormond – Curatorial Adviser and FOK Council Member

CURATORIAL REPORT

The first half of 2025 has been exceptionally busy and exciting. In April, the 18th century paintings in the Green Room and Music Room went on loan to Gainsborough’s House, Sudbury, for an exhibition entitled *Masterpieces from Kenwood*. John Singer Sargent paintings and drawings went up in their place and in May *Heiress: Sargent’s American Portraits* opened to the public, marking a new chapter in Kenwood’s curatorial programme.

Displays and Exhibitions

Heiress

Heiress: Sargent’s American Portraits brings together, for the first time, John Singer Sargent’s paintings and drawings of American heiresses who married into the British aristocracy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Sixteen of these so-called ‘dollar princesses’ are explored through eighteen artworks: eight oil paintings and ten charcoal portraits. The exhibition text, written by Wendy Monkhouse (Senior Curator) breaks down the ‘dollar princess’ stereotype by exploring their lives in depth, uncovering their personal achievements and experiences of integrating into British society. The exhibition marks the

centenary of John Singer Sargent’s death and celebrates our very own Sargent heiress, Daisy Leiter. For the first time, she hangs alongside her compatriots who were also painted and drawn by Sargent with exceptional skill.

Heiress is the first ticketed exhibition at Kenwood in over 25 years. Curated by Wendy Monkhouse with Richard Ormond as curatorial adviser, *Heiress* is a partnership between English Heritage and the Friends of Kenwood, who have supported the curation, and worked as fundraisers, and as organisers. In the first two weeks of opening, over 5,000 visitors have enjoyed *Heiress*. Many of them have never visited Kenwood before. The exhibition is expanding Kenwood’s audience and enriching the visitor experience, and we thank the Friends of Kenwood for making this possible.

A major loan of our 18th century paintings, including works by Gainsborough and Reynolds, is associated with *Heiress*. *Masterpieces from Kenwood: The Splendour of British & French Painting* is on show at Gainsborough’s House, Sudbury, from 3 May – 19 October. The exhibition highlights our exceptional collection of 18th century art and reaches new audiences. It is accompanied by a fantastic exhibition catalogue, generously supported by Helen Payne and Matthew Greenburgh, which is also available in the Kenwood House Shop.

The English Heritage Conservation team were essential to the success of *Masterpieces from Kenwood* and *Heiress*. A total of 47 artworks were condition checked, with some receiving light conservation treatments.

Double Vision: Vermeer at Kenwood

The loan of *Lady with the Guitar* from the Philadelphia Museum of Art has now been formally agreed, enabling us to reunite this painting with our own *Guitar Player*. This small display, titled *Double Vision: Vermeer at Kenwood*, is scheduled to open in September 2025.

In January, an international conservation team carried out new high-resolution photography and technical analysis of Vermeer’s *The Guitar Player*. We are working with partners in other organisations to interpret the data and will share the results in a digital article to coincide with the exhibition.

Double Vision will be a non-charging display that highlights the connection between two significant works and demonstrates the collaborative efforts of staff across multiple international institutions. The Friends of Kenwood are generously supporting both shows, along with English Heritage internal sources and funding sought by English Heritage Development.

Bath House Restoration

The Restoration work on the Bath House was completed in March 2025. A decision was made to informally open the space to the public while we wait for the treated surfaces to fully dry out, which takes a long time due to the

very humid environment. Discussions are ongoing about a formal opening.

Kristian Kaminski (Senior Properties Curator) led on the creation of a new interpretation panel. Kristian also wrote an article on the project for Ham & High magazine to raise awareness of the ongoing restoration and the historic interest of the Bath House.

Talks, Tours, and Digital

Talks and tours

On 21 February, Ella, John Hayward, and Angela Cox hosted Patrons of the National Gallery for a tour of the Iveagh Bequest. They were joined by Bart Cornelis, who talked about Kenwood's exceptional Dutch Golden Age paintings in the Dining Room. John and Angela gave wonderful and thought-provoking tours of the downstairs rooms. Ella would like to thank them again for sharing their knowledge of the collection and showcasing the many strengths of the Friends of Kenwood.

On 6 March, Ella and Keith Ferguson (Visitor Assistant) gave a tour to Patrons of the Sir John Soane's Museum. They were joined by Frances Sands, Curator of Drawings and Books at Sir John Soane's Museum, who brought copies of Adam's original drawings housed at the museum, which shed light on Kenwood's design and construction.

On 16 May, Ella and Wendy hosted Members of the Friends of Kenwood for a private view of *Heiress: Sargent's American Portraits*. An exciting programme of Friends of Kenwood events will take place throughout the exhibition run. On 20 May, Ella gave an exhibition tour to the English Heritage Legacy and Guardians group.

Digital

Heiress: Sargent's American Portraits has received widespread attention in the British and international press, including articles in The Guardian, The Times, Sunday Times, The New York Times, The Art Newspaper, Artnet News, Artlyst, Ham & High, Camden New Journal, UKinbound and Air Mail, as well as on TikTok and Instagram.

In May, English Heritage published a video titled *Meet the Heiress: Daisy Leiter*, in which the historian Lucy Worsley visits Ella Letort and Mark King (Friends of Kenwood council member and Volunteer) at Kenwood to explore Sargent's portrait of Daisy and her link to the Suffolk Collection.

Loans

In addition to the exceptional loans for *Heiress* and *Masterpieces from Kenwood*, other important loans were sent out and returned:

In September 2024, Louise Cooling travelled to Vienna with Rembrandt's *Self-portrait with Two Circles*. The painting was one of the highlights of *Rembrandt and Hoogstraten: Colour and Illusion* (8 Oct 2024 to 12 Jan 2025) at the Kunsthistorisches. The exhibition, was the first to examine

the relationship between Rembrandt and his eminent pupil Samuel van Hoogstraten, who was not only an artist but an art theorist and an important first-hand source on Rembrandt's views on painting. For the duration of the loan, the KHM generously lent their own late self-portrait by Peter Paul Rubens (1638) for display at Kenwood. In January 2025, Rembrandt's *Self-portrait with Two Circles* returned to Kenwood (couriered by Wendy Monkhouse) and was rehung in the Dining Room, alongside the two Willem van de Velde seascapes which had made room for an interpretation panel introducing the Rubens self-portrait. The KHM exhibition attracted over 240,000 visitors, greatly increasing the exposure of the painting and boosting Kenwood's international presence. The relationship between Kenwood and the Kunsthistorisches Museum was firmly established by this exchange, and we look forward to working with them again in future.

In early October 2024, *Emma Hart as The Spinstress* by George Romney travelled to the Gallerie d'Italia, Naples where Wendy oversaw its installation for the exhibition *William and Lady Hamilton*. The exhibition, which was open from 24 October 2024 until 2 March 2025, explored the life and interests of diplomat, antiquarian and volcanologist William Hamilton. Ahead of the loan, the painting travelled to the EH Conservation Studio in mid-August last year to undergo a surface clean and revarnish. During the loan, Joshua Reynolds' *The Fortune Teller* went on display in Lord Mansfield's Dressing Room. In March 2025, the *Spinstress* returned, couriered by Dickon Whitewood 1250 miles by road, with *The Fortune Teller* placed safely in storage for the time being.

Friends of Kenwood Funding

The exceptional level of funding provided by the Friends of Kenwood, and leveraged through their connections, for *Heiress*, is fully recognised and appreciated by the curatorial team on behalf of English Heritage. Without this support, the exhibition would not be taking place. We hope that visitor figures and secondary spend during the exhibition will demonstrate Kenwood's potential to attract funding and increased visitor numbers as well as visitor enjoyment.

Ella Letort – Acting Curator of Collections & Interiors, Kenwood

BGC AWARD FOR JULIUS BRYANT

We are delighted to report that former Kenwood curator and author of our definitive catalogue *Kenwood: Paintings in the Iveagh Bequest* has been awarded the prestigious 'Outstanding Lifetime Achievement Award' from the Iris Foundation and the Bard Graduate Center (BGC). This award is the top international award for curators and the list of past winners since 1997 is a roll call of the very great and the good in the profession.

Julius started his association with Kenwood in 1983 as Assistant Curator and moved on through various positions (with the support of Friends of Kenwood and its then Chairman George Levy) to become Director of Museums

and Collections for English Heritage. He went on to become the V&A's Keeper of Word and Image. He is still active as Keeper Emeritus and an active supporter of Kenwood and the Friends and will be a familiar figure to members at our lectures and events.



Julius with founder and presenter of the Iris Awards for the Decorative Arts, Dr Susan Weber

LANDSCAPE MATTERS

Twenty people attended this spring's Public Consultation about outdoor events at Kenwood. The meeting reviewed past events and planned summer outdoor events. The tipis will be erected in the Kitchen Garden for private events from 7 – 22 June. See below for other scheduled events. Attendees offered a number of imaginative ideas, including pop-up cafés in the summer, programming for the local community, the possibility of finding a dedicated space for dog memorials, the importance of communicating effectively to visitors to Kenwood, and the need to improve the Brew House café.

Once again, more classical music in Kenwood House was high on the list of suggestions as a way of bringing the house to life. The early music group, Saraband, were finally able to give two wonderful recitals in the Music Room in February (the planned November date had to be cancelled due to the entire estate being closed thanks to Storm Bert). Kenwood operations have said they would like to hold similar music recitals early in 2026, although we noted at the public consultation that by mid-November 2025, the Music Room would once again be available for music recitals.

The autumn Public Consultation is provisionally set for Monday 3 November 2025.

Landscape questions are often raised at our AGM, but this year, questions focussed more on music opportunities, as in the Public Consultation, and on the unsatisfactory service in the café. At the Landscape Forum, it was asked

why there was still no descriptive label for Hepworth's *Monolith (Empyrean)*, given that it is a year since it was discussed at the 2024 FOK AGM, and the newly planted hedge, now 3 rows deep, of *Euonymus japonicus* 'Green Spire' remains in a poor condition.

As reported in recent Newsletters, Wood Pond and Thousand Pound Pond will in the future need to comply with regulations under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. With our fellow local stakeholders who are members of the Landscape Forum, we have stressed to English Heritage the desirability of stabilising the banks by coppicing and inspecting regularly (as the City of London does on the Hampstead Heath dams). The panel engineer has identified 13 poor specimens out of 33 trees to fell, but we would favour careful management of scrub and tree growth.

The Chubb Shelter, which borders Kenwood and Hampstead Heath, has had its roof repaired, a fresh coat of paint, and the graffiti covered over.

The gardens team has been severely constrained by lack of budget, and the entire estates budget across the country has suffered as part of the English Heritage 'reshaping'. While Kenwood is one of English Heritage's biggest gardens, other sites around the country need urgent attention. However, with the help of Heath Hands and the gardens volunteers, Wood Pond, the path north from Stone Bridge, the sphagnum bog, and the ha-ha by the Dairy have been cleared of invasive species. On East Drive, there has been reduction of shrubs and trees to give a sense of tiered staging, likewise on the east Inner Circuit, where branches of the sassafras tree have been lifted and continued laurel reduction allows more light into the area.

Thank you to all our members for your regular feedback about all aspects of Kenwood House, its world-class paintings collection, and the estate. Our objective is always to ensure the House, its art collection and the estate are safeguarded for generations to come. We welcome any comments you might have about current or future plans.

Hampstead Heath News

Hampstead Heath is a charity, and is run by the City of London. It is a vital resource for us all. To encourage Heath users to share the aspirations of the Heath Vision, there is a donations page:

<https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/hampstead-heath/donate-to-hampstead-heath>

Check out the Heath Hands website if you would like to find out more about these hard-working volunteers who help out at Kenwood and all over Hampstead Heath. They make an important contribution towards keeping the Kenwood estate looking so spectacular throughout the year.

The 2025 Kite Display will be at Parliament Hill and its bandstand on 29 June, 12 - 4pm.

There are 7 boards on the Heath and at Kenwood, plus a new noticeboard at the Chubb Shelter, which aim to raise

awareness of the Heath's biodiversity. They change quarterly with the seasons.

Summer Fairs

Don't forget that *Highgate Fair in the Square* is on 7 June and the *Hampstead Big Fair* is on 6 July. *Highgate Festival* is from 21 - 29 June.

VISIT TO POPE'S GROTTTO

17 December 2024



Statue in the wall of the Grotto

Last December, a group of curious visitors descended into one of Twickenham's most unusual historical sites: Pope's Grotto. Nestled beneath what was once the villa of 18th century poet Alexander Pope, the grotto offered an atmospheric morning escape from everyone's Christmas preparations.

Alexander Pope (1688–1744), celebrated for his sharp wit, made Twickenham his home in 1719. He leased the land to build his house upon it from Thomas Vernon, because he was a Catholic and so was not allowed to own land. Though Pope's villa was demolished in the 19th century, the grotto he created beneath it remains remarkably intact and has recently been restored as a Grade II* structure. What began as a simple tunnel under the road to his garden evolved into a personal sanctuary that reflected Pope's engagement with art, nature, and classical learning.

The grotto lies within the grounds of a school, and the first 'wow' moment actually came before we descended into the grotto's stone-lined passageway: the expanse of the River Thames from the terrace is truly breathtaking, and must have been a great deal more so in Pope's day. All contemporary pictures of Pope's villa are from the river: the turnpike was only built in 1767, and it was preceded first by a rural lane, and then by the highway, so there was limited access to it (and neighbouring properties) except by water. Once the road was built, it's a miracle the tunnel did not collapse, and it stood intact and unfortified until 1930.

We were welcomed by our guides, Professor Judith Hawley (the 'Thames Luminaries' leading light) and Mike Cherry,

local historian and a trustee of the Pope's Grotto Preservation Trust. They gave us a short introduction to Pope's life and the context in which the grotto was conceived. It is a tunnel with side-chambers, and Pope worked with William Kent and Lord Burlington's workmen on its design. Alexander Pope suffered from tuberculosis and spent his life in chronic pain – "this long disease, my life". In 1739, he went to a spa in Bristol and was so taken with what he saw there that he decided to create his own geological collection. Friends sent him minerals from tin and copper mines in Cornwall, while one of the most notable rocks embedded in a side-chamber is a 'mother amethyst.'

The grotto's walls, encrusted with shells, mirrors, and mineral specimens from across Britain and Europe, fossils, pieces of marble, and semi-precious stones, give the impression of a natural cave.

Pope drew inspiration for his grotto from Roman and Renaissance precedents, but he also imbued it with Enlightenment ideals. The space reflects his fascination with knowledge and the interplay between artifice and nature.

Alexander Pope financed the building of his villa and its grounds through revenues from subscriptions to his translation of *The Iliad*. On his death in 1744, Pope was buried, together with his parents in the nearby parish church of St Mary's, and – a nice Kenwood connection – William Murray was his executor.

After his death, the house had various owners until it was bought in 1807 by Baroness Howe (who Turner called 'Queen of the Goths'). She was a niece of Kenwood's Lady Howe and, being irritated by the stream of Pope pilgrims invading her privacy, she knocked the house down. Pope's garden, created with the help of Lord Bathurst from Cirencester has similarly disappeared, built over by another school. But the grotto remains. It's a powerful physical reminder of his creative legacy and testifies to the enduring importance of preserving small, lesser-known heritage sites. Pope's known physical disability has given Pope's Grotto Preservation Trust access to 21st century funding for educational outreach, and has served them well in keeping this intimate site of such curious beauty open to curious visitors.

VISIT TO 'CONSTABLE AND THE HAY WAIN' AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY

16 January 2025

"Landscape is my mistress, it is to her I will owe my fame"
John Constable, 1812

With this statement in mind, National Gallery guide, Emma Matthews took us through over 300 years of landscapes in the National Gallery's collection, illustrating the influence they had on John Constable until he painted his 'Six-Footer,' *The Hay Wain* in 1821. The point of the National Gallery's small show was to investigate why *The Hay Wain* has such iconic status as the traditional image of the English countryside, to examine how Constable's

contemporaries created rural scenes and to discover why some found his approach to be quite radical.



A View of Het Steen in the Early Morning, Rubens (detail)

Our tour of the gallery looked for the roots of Constable's approach to landscape painting and what he might have seen to shape his practice. It is no mean task to take on the vast collection of the National Gallery in order to unpick a single theme, but we successfully followed the thread. No better place to start than the early introduction of landscape features and the use of aerial perspective in Titian's *Noli me tangere* (c1514), and Giovanni Bellini's *Saint Jerome reading in a Landscape* (c1480-5). We moved swiftly on to Dutch landscape, where there was no indication of religion, just good, productive agricultural land, chiming with the protestant English: Van Ruisdael's *A Landscape with a Ruined Castle and a Church* (1665-70) was bequeathed to the National Gallery in 1876 by Wynn Ellis, who started life as a mercer from Oundle, almost as East Anglian, and from similar roots, as Constable.

The "solemn grandeur" of Van Ruisdael contrasts dramatically with Italian and Spanish art under the shadow of the Counter-Reformation. The looming scenery of Salvator Rosa's c1641 painting, *Landscape with Travellers asking the Way* points the way for Constable towards romanticism and the sublime. It depicts a group of peasants resting at the side of the road under some significant trees with twisted trunks, and a man on a white horse points towards a glowing landscape in the valley beyond. Sound familiar? It is no surprise that our Constable path then led us to Gainsborough, and to another pioneer of landscape painting in Britain, Richard Wilson, 'the English Claude'.

Encouraged by Vernet, and after visiting Italy, Richard Wilson's *The Valley of the Dee* (c1761) looks more like Italy or France than Wales; here begins romanticism and the picturesque. At this point one has to question the degree to which these landscapes are "truthful" and what Constable might have made of them. He certainly would also have been able to consider the style of Claude in *Hagar and the Angel* (1646) owned by his friend Sir George Beaumont (presented to NG in 1828) and also *The Mill Landscape with the Marriage of Isaac & Rebekah* (1648) owned by John Julius Angerstein until he sold it to the National Gallery in 1824. Beaumont, great benefactor of the National Gallery, was undoubtedly important to Constable's self-education. He owned two paintings Constable would have undoubtedly

studied: Canaletto's *Stone Mason's Yard* (1725) (passed to NG in 1828), and *Het Steen* (1636) by Rubens, both a contrast to Claude and Poussin.

And so we reached *The Hay Wain*, painted in 1821 and exhibited at the Royal Academy that year, around the time Constable moved with his family to Hampstead. It's a studio painting, the culmination of about 20 years of sketches and studies, including his many sketches of clouds and sky (readers will remember the 4 exquisite sketches of skies over Hampstead that the Royal Academy lent to Kenwood in 2024). With his preoccupation with the time and with the weather, it's no surprise that Constable originally titled this work "Landscape, Noon".

Géricault saw it at the RA in 1821 and was smitten with it, and in 1824, the art dealer Arrowsmith took it to France for exhibit at the 1824 French salon. Charles X of France awarded it a gold medal. During his life, Constable sold only 20 paintings in England, but in France he sold more than 20 in just a few years. The path had turned full circle: he had drawn on Claude and Poussin, but it was Constable's managed landscape of *The Hay Wain* which encouraged French artists to re-examine their approach to landscape ready for the 19th century.

The Hay Wain was not seen again until the 1860s, and in 1886 it was presented to the National Gallery. 140 years later, it deserves this contextualising examination: it's part of our cultural landscape.

VISIT TO DULWICH PG AND 'TIRZAH GARWOOD: BEYOND RAVILIOUS'

21 March 2025



As dedicated art followers, most of our readers will be familiar with the Dulwich Picture Gallery. You might be less familiar, however, with the wide knowledge of John Woolman, member of the Friends of Kenwood and a Blue Badge guide, who was to take us on a tour of the DPG's permanent collection. Notwithstanding reviewer's bias, it was a tour not to be missed.

Founded in 1811, Dulwich Picture Gallery was the first purpose-built public art gallery in England. It rose from the vision of Sir Francis Bourgeois, a Polish-born court painter to George III, who bequeathed his art collection to Dulwich College. Bourgeois' close friendship with the art

dealers Noel and Margaret Desenfans, whose collections form a large portion of the gallery's holdings, caused them to hatch a plan: they wanted to set up a national gallery that would bring Old Master paintings to the public.

The permanent collection comprises over 600 Old Master paintings from the 17th to the 19th centuries. Highlights include works by Rembrandt, Rubens, Canaletto, and Poussin, alongside Gainsborough and Reynolds. John's historical expertise added colour to what is one of the country's greatest collections: who knew the story of the fatal viper wine, imbibed by Venetia, Lady Digby to cure her headache? Van Dyck was summoned by Venetia's distraught husband 'the second day after she was dead', in 1633 (more likely, she suffered a cerebral haemorrhage). Rembrandt's *Girl at a Window* (1645) is effectively the DPG's 'must see', and particularly arresting, although his portrait of *A Young Man* (1668), perhaps his son Titus, is more introspective and compelling. Titus died the same year, and a year later, Rembrandt was dead. Another portrait by Rembrandt, of *Jacob de Gheyn III* (1632) whose companion portrait of *Maurits Huygens* is in Hamburg, has the doubtful honour of being in the Guinness Book of Records as the world's most stolen painting.

The DPG has been doing its bit to showcase overlooked female artists, and to this end held an exhibition which finished at the end of May 2025 dedicated to Tirza Garwood (1908–1951). Often overshadowed by her husband, Eric Ravilious, Garwood is gaining recognition for her distinct voice and style, and the show has been very popular, with critics giving it positive reviews.

The exhibition traces Garwood's artistic development from early linocuts and illustrations to her later paintings. Her work has an element of surrealism, blending domestic scenes with a whimsical, dreamlike quality, although there is also a touch of the naïf about some of her pieces. Add to that occasionally disturbing satirical wit found in German Expressionism, and it is hard to find a label to suit her.

Perhaps most moving are her later works, painted while she was battling illness, sometimes laid up in bed for long periods of time. In particular, *The Orchard*, (1951), completed shortly before her death, is surprisingly poignant. Regardless of the gallery interpretation, she succeeds in capturing the beauty of life while somehow managing to convey regret that she does not have long to live.

Whether Tirzah Garwood will go down as one of the country's greatest overlooked artists remains to be seen, but the exhibition succeeds in celebrating her achievements as an artist as well as a human being of the interwar years, aware of grand-scale absurdities, but alive to small pleasures.

Bourgeois' original dream was to make great art accessible, meaningful, and alive, and, with added assistance from John Woolman, that was what we all experienced on an extremely enjoyable morning.

VISIT TO 'THE EDWARDIANS: AGE OF ELEGANCE' AT THE KING'S GALLERY

28 April 2025



Snake's head cigarette case by Fabergé

After enjoying a fascinating Curator's introduction and tour last year of the gallery's exhibition of works by Hans Holbein, a group of Friends of Kenwood was keen to appreciate its latest offering.

If extra incentive were needed, awareness of chronological and contextual links with Kenwood's own imminent exhibition *Heiress: Sargent's American Portraits* gave this visit additional resonance.

Senior Curator of Decorative Arts, Kathryn Jones's introduction to her exhibition certainly did not disappoint! Our dive back into the 'Gilded Age' before the outbreak of the Great War in 1914 explored the lives and influential tastes of two of Britain's most fashionable royal couples – King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra, and King George V and Queen Mary.

Starting at the time of Edward and Alexandra's wedding in 1863, we learned about their family lives, hobbies and pets, their avid personal collecting, and we became familiar with their glittering social circles, not to mention spectacular royal events in Britain and around the Empire up until 1919.

During that time the 6th Earl of Mansfield still owned Kenwood, leasing it out first to Prince Mikhail Mikhailovich and his wife Sophie, Countess de Torby - exiled members of Russia's imperial family and close relatives of the Windsors - then to its final tenant, the widowed American heiress Nancy Leeds.

More than 300 objects from the Royal Collection were on display – almost half for the first time – including works by the most renowned contemporary artists of the period. These included Carl Fabergé, Frederic Leighton, Edward Burne-Jones, Rosa Bonheur, Laurits Tuxen, and William Morris. And of course, work by John Singer Sargent, described by King Edward as 'the most distinguished portrait painter in England.' One of Sargent's final oil paintings depicts Louise, Duchess of Connaught (1908) and there is also a well-observed charcoal sketch of Edward, Prince of Wales (1920).

Several gifts given to or by royal mistresses were on display, including the notorious snake's head Art Nouveau cigarette case made by Fabergé and given to King Edward by his mistress, Mrs Keppel in 1908. Perhaps recognising its personal significance, the widowed Queen Alexandra returned it to Mrs Keppel as a memento following her husband's death two years later. In 1936 Mrs Keppel gave the case to Queen Mary, thereby ensuring that it would remain in royal ownership.

We saw a copy of the second edition of his *Poems* signed as 'Your Highnesses' faithful servant' by Oscar Wilde himself. There were stunning items of jewellery commissioned from top designers – necklaces, tiaras, rings, bracelets - and fashions in clothing and the decorative arts that reflected new tastes and set new trends.

Royal enthusiasm for photography was quite an eye-opener, revealing intimacies of family life and their circles of friends, but other portraits captured the times powerfully too. For instance, an impressive chalk portrait by William Strang of First Sea Lord Admiral (Jackie) Fisher in naval uniform. Fisher modernised the Royal Navy and was one of the first recipients of the Order of Merit.

Kathryn's narrative of glitz, glitter and globetrotting gaiety carried us through a fascinating introduction, before she handled our stream of questions with generosity and insight.

Until, inevitably, we were brought home in the final exhibition space with a series of contrasting, arrestingly bleak images of 'the war to end all wars' and khaki-clad solemnity recording the Unknown Warrior's cortège passing the Cenotaph en route to interment in Westminster Abbey.

The Edwardians: Age of Elegance is at the King's Gallery, Buckingham Palace until 23 November 2025.

VISIT TO VICTOR HUGO DRAWINGS AT ROYAL ACADEMY

30 May 2025

"Made in the margins during hours of almost unconscious reverie with what remained of the ink in my pen"

Fantasy castles on rocky crags, giant octopus, underwater shipwrecks, stormy seas, a giant poisonous mushroom with a ghostly human face on its stem – these are some of the subjects of Victor Hugo's drawings and a small group of Friends were able to enjoy them on an early-morning curator's view at the Royal Academy.

Victor Hugo was a leading public figure in 19th century France and won worldwide acclaim with his novels *Les Misérables* and *Notre-Dame de Paris*. It was explained to us that he despised the English title of the latter – *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* – and indeed resisted learning English all his life, even during his 20-year exile on the Channel Islands for political activism.

The exhibition shows 70 of more than 4000 drawings known to have been made by Hugo throughout his life and they are extremely fragile due to the unusual materials with which they were executed (including finger-prints, postage stamps and coffee grounds!) and they have not been seen in the UK for over 50 years.

Connections to his literary oeuvre are rare and the drawings are not illustrations but deeply personal, exploratory visions or invocations of the sub-conscious.

Hugo began by filling sketchbooks with precise pencil drawings of landscape and architecture and moved on to more experimental techniques to depict atmospheric cloudscapes and (mostly dark) weather. Many of the images are tiny, such as the *The Abandoned Park* shown below but he later created larger-scale proto-surrealist works such as the *Mushroom* mentioned above.



The Abandoned Park

During his exile he also explored more unconventional methods such as ink blots, rubbings, stencils and collage and even abstract compositions, which he called *taches*, or stains, and which long pre-date the Surrealist movement.

While in Guernsey Hugo also engaged in a political campaign against capital punishment, specifically against the execution of John Tapner. The campaign was unsuccessful but Tapner's was the last execution in Guernsey and Hugo created a series of graphic drawings of a man being hanged which he thence kept on the wall of his house at Saint Peter Port.

It was a treat to immerse ourselves in Hugo's protean and largely gothic imaginative world and we appreciated this opportunity to view fragile works which are unlikely to travel again soon.

KENWOOD ESTATE SPRING WALK

15 May 2025

Head gardener Crissy Mulrain began this walk with a recap of the early spring. In addition to the pine which was removed from Half-Moon Lawn, as foreshadowed in our last Newsletter, an established oak recently fell down in full leaf. There has been no significant rain for weeks.

The entire Kenwood estate is cared for by Crissy and two gardeners, along with assistance from contractors as necessary; they are very stretched over 112 acres, and they can always do with extra help, so if anyone is interested, please contact her.

North Wood is less visited than the rest of Kenwood, so it was a pleasure to go up the hill to admire some of Kenwood's original beech trees and find the view to the house through the gap in the trees. The SSSI, including its stable dead wood, supports a variety of invertebrates, a large bat population and diverse birds. Woodpeckers reside elsewhere on the estate, favouring marginal birch trees, and there are a number of raptors. In 2020, the Heath and Hampstead Society organised a survey of nesting birds on Hampstead Heath and more recently Heath Hands has encouraged visitors to participate in the Big Bird Watch.

We passed the dog graves which date from Grand Duke Mikhail Mikhailovich's years at Kenwood, including Mac, "faithful friend", and then spent time on the historic path to the Dairy, restored in 2012-13 as part of the *Caring for Kenwood* project. This area has now had over 10 years of growth and some plants, such as the healthy myrtle and some large rhododendrons, will soon be cut back. Sweet woodruff (*Galium odoratum*) is excellent ground cover, while both types of periwinkle, major and minor are now well established. The *Edgeworthia chrysantha* (paper bush, held by the Chinese to bring good luck) bears its bright yellow flowers early on bare wood and the bladder nut tree (*Staphylea trifolia*) is in good shape.



Arisaema triphyllum, Jack-in-the-pulpit

We spent some time examining a low profile arum lily one would normally walk right past: *Arisaema triphyllum*, known as Jack in the Pulpit in the USA, and similar to the Japanese Cobra Lily (see photo). Its structure is fascinating – it has tiny flowers on a rod, called a spadix, and it emits a slight smell of rot. This attracts flies, which cannot escape, but when they are exhausted, they drop to the bottom and crawl out, covered in pollen, and thus are efficient pollinators.

We are in the middle of Oak Processionary Moth season, and while Hampstead Heath no longer sprays for the caterpillar which can be irritating to humans and dogs, Kenwood and English Heritage continue to do so. Different protocols for OPM exist throughout Europe; it does not kill trees, and the caterpillars can often be easily seen. Alert a member of staff immediately if you see any!

Our tour ended by one of the highlights of spring at Kenwood: the handkerchief tree, *Davidia involucrata*, named after Father Armand David and first described in 1869. Kenwood's tree was planted in 1901 and is the widest in England.

Our thanks as always to Crissy Mulrain, Kenwood Head Gardener for a highly enjoyable and informative tour. There's always something new to discover – why not join us for the next one?

FRIENDS OF KENWOOD AGM

6 April 2025

The 48th Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Iveagh Bequest, Kenwood (the Friends of Kenwood) was held at Kenwood House on Sunday, 6 April 2025. It was attended by 30 Friends (including 10 officeholders) and 3 representatives from English Heritage (EH).

The Chair, Dame Jenny Abramsky, reported on the Friends' activities since the last AGM on 14 April 2024. The Friends have supported English Heritage by funding the conservation and digitisation of the Andover Albums which will be available on the English Heritage and Art UK websites. The Friends contributed to the work on restoring and conserving the Bath House and granted funds towards the Wi-Fi and audio-visual upgrade in the Lecture Theatre which has made a significant difference to our lecture programme. The watercolour of the Adam Library by Frank Hoar in 1956 was purchased with funds provided by the Friends.

The Council agreed to fully support the *Heiress: Sargent's American Portraits* exhibition to open in May 2025. The Friends embarked on a significant fundraising exercise to enable English Heritage to stage major exhibitions at Kenwood once again. This has meant Kenwood has lent twenty-nine paintings from the Music Room and Green Room to Gainsborough's House for an exhibition entitled *Masterpieces from Kenwood: The Splendour of British & French Painting* over the duration of the Sargent exhibition at Kenwood.

The Philadelphia Museum of Art will loan *A Lady Playing the Guitar* to be seen with Kenwood's Vermeer *The Guitar Player* in a display *Double Vision: Vermeer at Kenwood* in Autumn 2025, which is also being supported by the Friends.

The Sunday lectures continued to be of high quality and were well attended. They are live streamed to make them available for the wider membership. Most of the lectures are recorded and form a valuable resource on YouTube. Visits were well received.

With the financial support of the Friends, English Heritage had commissioned a new Masterplan for the House and estate. The Masterplan was completed in 2024 and the hope is that its recommendations will be implemented over the coming years.

The Friends are grateful to Dr Adriano Aymonino for giving the annual lecture on the *Grand Tours of James and Robert Adam* at the members' Annual Fundraising event which was attended by a full house. The Adam Library was open for guests before the lecture and the newly purchased watercolour was on display there for all guests to see. The lecture was followed by a drinks reception. This year, the Friends again held their Christmas drinks party in the Upper Hall.

The Chairman reported that membership had increased slightly, with 612 members as of April 2025, with several Ordinary members upgrading to Life membership. We are grateful to our corporate benefactors, The Rubin Foundation, Julius Baer and Killik & Co, for their steadfast support, as well as to our Vermeer (Chris Carter and Kane Chu) and Rembrandt (Elizabeth Meek, John Owens and Jenny Abramsky) Friends.

The Treasurer, Ken Solomons, reported a surplus of £9,029.81 for the year, after grants of £10,000 had been made to EH to support the conservation of the Bath House and £15,000 as a significant part of the cost of upgrading the audio-visual equipment in the Lecture Theatre.

Victoria Stone joined Kenwood as Interim General Manager on secondment from Osborne House. Ella Letort joined as the maternity cover Curator of Collections and Interiors following Louise Cooling's twelve-month maternity leave from January 2025. Rebecca Bennett returned to Kenwood as Collections Conservator for London after a one-year secondment at the Imperial War Museum. English Heritage appointed a new Food and Beverage Manager, Tania Styler along with a completely new team at the Brew House and Steward's Room. Ilaria Cannava joined as Assistant Food and Beverage Manager, Amy Bellringer joined as Operations Manager, Robert Bradshaw as Senior Gardener. Joyshree Saikia joined the team as the Volunteer Manager, while Ben Noton is now a Site Supervisor. An additional Site Supervisor will be appointed soon. Several events are scheduled to be held on the estate in 2025.

Strike a Pose: Stephen Farthing and the Swagger Portrait, held between June and September 2024, encouraged visitors to engage with the Stuart portraits in fresh and dynamic ways.

Conservation and research were carried out on The Suffolk Collection painting attributed to the school of Flemish portraitist Anthonis Mor, identified as Mary Beaton, Lady-in-Waiting to Mary, Queen of Scots. A further painting from The Suffolk Collection, *Elizabeth Cecil*, is undergoing treatment and conservation. It was shown at the English Heritage Chairman's Reception in a partially cleaned state, illustrating the transformative work of the Conservation Studio.

Louise Cooling and Wendy Monkhouse, Senior Curator, South delivered several interesting tours and talks during the year. Louise delivered several private tours to various groups while Wendy participated in an intimate in-person conversation in front of Van Dyck's *Portrait of Henrietta of Lorraine attended by a Page* between Wendy and Enuma Okoro during the FT Festival at Kenwood.

The curatorial team contributed several articles to the English Heritage website as well as their members' magazines and through social media channels as well as in national newspapers.

English Heritage thanked the Friends of Kenwood for their ongoing and generous funding support for various projects and most specially for the exceptional level of funding provided by the Friends and leveraged through their connections for *Heiress*.

The Chair thanked all Council members for their time, expertise and commitment to Kenwood.

The Report, in full, will be available on the Friends' website.

Mala Gole, Secretary, Friends of Kenwood

LECTURES AND EVENTS AUTUMN 2025

Please see the separate Lectures and Events sheet for more details of our lectures, visits and events, or visit our website

Lectures

Lectures take place in the Lecture Room starting at 11am. Numbers are limited and so pre-booking is advised - details for booking will be given in the Friends of Kenwood email news bulletin that precedes the lecture.

Our lectures will also be live-streamed on our YouTube channel. Whenever possible, the lectures are recorded.

Sunday 21 September, **Radical Harmony: Helene Kröller-Müller's Neo-Impressionists**
Julien Domercq

Sunday 19 October, **Here and Now**
Humphrey Ocean

Sunday 16 November, **J.M.W Turner and John Constable : rivals or colleagues?**
Anne Lyles

Sunday 7 December, **The Art of Christmas: Beyond the Familiar**
Colin Wiggins
You are warmly invited to a Christmas Drinks party in the Upper Hall after this lecture.

Events

Wed 10 September, **Friends Annual Evening Event**

We are hosting a Sargent-themed evening with talk and dinner in the Orangery. Further details to follow.

Autumn Estate Walk

Thursday 6 November, 10.30 am, **Autumn at Kenwood**

OUTDOOR EVENTS AT KENWOOD SUMMER 2025

For all events, large vehicles on the South Terrace will be kept to a minimum to minimise damage and dust caused by deliveries in this area. While the grounds will always be accessible, areas inside the fence line will be closed to the public and we ask you to be mindful of your own health & safety.

Barcode Festival

Thursday 3 July, 2pm – 11:30pm

In collaboration with GroceryAid. A new event, the Barcode Festival is a ticketed music event with a capacity of 8,000 people. English Heritage have assured us that there will be no large vehicles passing in front of the house, which we are concerned poses a risk of damage to the fabric of the House and the collection.

The Lord Chamberlain's Men

Sunday 24 August: **Twelfth Night** (on the Half-Moon Lawn at 7pm, doors open 6pm)

The UK's premier touring all-male theatre company

Financial Times Weekend Festival

6 September

The Institute of Art and Ideas at Kenwood

21 & 22 September: **How the Light Gets In**

AUTUMN AND WINTER 2025

Halloween at Kenwood with RG Live will take place from 17 October – 2 November (set up will start on 4 October) Tickets will range from £14 - £18, and it will be open from 4.30pm – 8.30pm.

This will be followed immediately by **Christmas Neverland at Kenwood**, also with RG Live, and this will take place from 14 November – 4 January (take down will end on 14 January).

RG Live is the promoter of the events, working with Culture Creative, a production company; other similar seasonal events they produce include Christmas at Kew and at Blenheim Palace.

Friends of Kenwood will be offered discounts for both events. More information for both events will be provided once we know it.

An Audience with Father Christmas will start on 29 November 2025; this has become very popular, so be ready to book as soon as you see it advertised!

A great local service is the sale of **Christmas Trees** at West Lodge car park by Pines & Needles, which we hope will return in 2025.

KENWOOD HOUSE OPENING TIMES

Kenwood is open 7 days a week, from 10am – 5pm until 28 October, when it moves to winter hours 10am – 4pm.

Second-Hand Bookshop

The Second-hand Bookshop in Mansion Cottage near the Brew House café is entirely run by volunteers. It has become a great success story for Kenwood and opening hours have now been extended to every day of the week, 12pm – 4pm. It has some fabulous books for sale and takes donations during opening hours. All profits remain at Kenwood.

Kenwood Needs Volunteers!

To keep Kenwood open in the way it was intended, nearly every day of the year, English Heritage needs Volunteers. If you know of anyone who might be interested in joining the existing group of wonderfully loyal Volunteers, please go to the English Heritage Volunteering page or send an email marked for the attention of the Kenwood Volunteer Manager to Kenwood.House@english-heritage.org.uk.

YOUR FRIENDS MEMBERSHIP DON'T DELAY – RENEW TODAY! WE NEED YOU!

The new membership year begins on 1 June 2025, and membership rates are:

Single annual membership	£25 p.a.
Joint annual membership	£35 p.a.
Associate (u-18s & full-time students)	£9 p.a.
Single Life Membership	£375
Joint Life Membership	£500

Rembrandt Friend	£300 p.a.
Vermeer Friend	£750 p.a.

Please continue to support us and our work for Kenwood by renewing your membership as soon as you can.

You can pay in a number of ways. You can pay by **Direct Debit** or **PayPal**, both available via the Join Us page on our website, <https://friendsofkenwood.org.uk/join-us/>. You can also pay by **Bank Transfer** to our account. All

details can also be found on the Join Us page on our website.

The advantage of paying by Direct Debit is that you do not have to think about renewing every year and your cards are sent to you automatically.

You can continue to pay by **cheque** (payable to 'Friends of Kenwood'), but we would much prefer an electronic form of payment to speed up processing.

You can complete the renewal membership form here:

<https://friendsofkenwood.org.uk/membership-form/>

You will also receive a posted reminder to renew (unless you are a Life Member or currently pay by Direct Debit).

If you wish to support us even more generously, you might consider becoming a Rembrandt or a Vermeer Friend, all details are also on our website.

The loyalty of our members is really important to the Friends of Kenwood. It helps us advocate for Kenwood, and encourages us in our ambition to safeguard Kenwood as English Heritage's greatest asset at a time when art patronage is sorely needed.

We need lots of support as well as encouragement so please renew your membership and encourage your friends and family to join too!

For instant updates, please keep checking our Facebook, X(formerly Twitter) and Instagram posts.

Don't forget we also have a YouTube channel which has turned into a fantastic digital archive for most of our lectures and talks on many of the most well-known paintings at Kenwood.

Help the Friends of Kenwood when you shop online!

Please consider supporting us through GiveAsYouLive. It is very easy to use and costs nothing.

A number of our members already help us by nominating us as their chosen charity when they make online purchases, and we have received nearly £700 to date.

Once you have registered, we receive a small donation each time you make a purchase.

To sign up for Give As You Live, you just have to register at www.giveasyoulive.com/join/kenwoodfriends.

SUPPORTING THE FRIENDS OF KENWOOD

We rely on your support to keep our high profile at Kenwood House, and we would welcome any donation you feel able to make. Kenwood is under the care of The English Heritage Trust, itself a registered charity with no government funding. Our aim at the Friends of Kenwood is to keep Kenwood a top priority within English Heritage's national portfolio.

English Heritage is working on the implementation of a Master Plan for Kenwood over the coming years and support for this will increase the demands on our resources.

If you would like to make an additional financial contribution to our work, please contact our Treasurer, Ken Solomons by emailing him at kssco@aol.com or writing to him c/o Kenwood House, NW3 7JR.

You can also support us by remembering the Friends of Kenwood in your will. If you choose to include the Friends in your will, you will need to direct your gift to our registered charity number: 273258. It is simple to do and tax efficient.

A further benefit of leaving a gift to Friends of Kenwood, or any other qualifying charity, is that this amount will not be subject to Inheritance Tax. In addition, if total charitable bequests amount to at least 10% of the taxable estate, then the Inheritance Tax chargeable on the balance is reduced from 40% to 36%.

VERMEER AND REMBRANDT FRIENDS

The Friends would like to extend grateful thanks to the following for their continuing support:

Vermeer Friend: Chris Carter, Kane Chu
Rembrandt Friends: Jenny Abramsky, Elizabeth Meek, John Owens

CORPORATE BENEFACTORS

The Friends would like to extend grateful thanks to the following for supporting us as Corporate Benefactors:

The Rubin Foundation

KILLIK & Co

Julius Bär

LECTURES AND VISITS SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 2025

Lectures take place in the Lecture Room starting at 11am.

Numbers are limited and so pre-booking is advised - details for booking will be given in the Friends of Kenwood email news bulletin that precedes the lecture.

Our lectures will also be live-streamed on our YouTube channel. Whenever possible, the lectures are recorded.

LECTURES

Sunday 21 September, **Radical Harmony: Helene Kröller-Müller's Neo-Impressionists**

Julien Domercq



Le Chahut by Georges Seurat, 1889-90

Neo-Impressionism made its public debut in Paris at the final Impressionist Exhibition of 1886. A new generation of artists, led by Georges Seurat, aimed to replace Impressionism's spontaneity and rapid execution with a painstaking technique in which dots of pure colour were placed side by side to maximise luminosity. Harmony was prioritised over the capture of fleeting moments, and objects of the observable world were pared back to their essential forms. Neo-Impressionism's radical harmony, in combination with its strong allegiance to radical politics, rapidly attracted followers – particularly in France, Belgium and the Netherlands. The exhibition at the National Gallery reflects the vision of the great collector, Helene Kröller-Müller. Loans from her collection – including Seurat's *Le Chahut* – form the core of the exhibition, alongside major international loans and paintings from the National Gallery.

Organised thematically, the exhibition engages with themes such as anarchist politics, portraiture, popular entertainment, interiors and interiority and the Neo-Impressionists' propensity to simplify and distil their scenes – so that their pictures sometimes verged on pure abstraction. Untethering the picture from its dependence on subject matter by increasing the emphasis on colour, light and geometry, Neo-Impressionism paved the way for 'modern' painting.

Julien Domercq, curator of *Radical Harmony: Helene Kröller-Müller's Neo-Impressionists*, is Curator at the Royal Academy of Arts, London, responsible for 19th century and Old Masters exhibitions. Among exhibitions he has curated are *Kiefer/ Van Gogh* (2025) and he co-curated *Michelangelo, Leonardo, Raphael: Florence, c. 1504* (2024-25), *After Impressionism: Inventing Modern Art* (2023) and *Drawn in Colour: Degas from the Burrell* (2017-18).

Sunday 19 October, **Here and Now**
Humphrey Ocean



Maurice by Humphrey Ocean, 2023
Photo Mike Bruce

Humphrey Ocean RA is one of Britain's most distinguished contemporary painters. He will speak about what it is to be standing in his shoes and why at any given moment being local is important to what he does. The talk introduces his forthcoming exhibition at Gainsborough's House, Sudbury.

While he was training at the Canterbury College of Art, Ocean was also, in 1971-3, the bass player with 'Kilburn and the High Roads'. In 1982 he won the Imperial Tobacco Portrait Award (National Portrait Gallery) and with the portraits of Paul McCartney and Philip

Larkin established himself as a leading portrait painter, depicting his sitters in a post-pop-art style. He was artist-in-residence at Dulwich Picture Gallery, 2002. In 2013 his painting *Lord Volvo and his Estate* was one of

Britain's 57 favourite paintings displayed on billboards across the country in *Art Everywhere* by Art Fund.

Ocean was elected a Royal Academician in 2004 and served as Professor of Perspective, 2012-2020. He has exhibited widely, including among solo exhibitions: *how's my driving*, 2003, Dulwich Picture Gallery; *A handbook of modern life*, 2012-13, National Portrait Gallery; *That was close*, 2024, DKUK, Peckham, London; *Das Bild und sein Buch*, 2024, Christine König Galerie, Vienna; *Sometimes I wonder*, 2025, Vivienne Roberts Projects, London. His published books include *Big Mouth: The Amazon Speaks* (with anthropologist Stephen Nugent), 1990; *Humphrey Ocean* (monograph by Ben Thomas), 2019; *A Book of Birds*, 2019 and *Africa*, 2025.

His work is in collections including British Council, British Museum, Victoria & Albert Museum, National Portrait Gallery, Government Art Collection, National Galleries, Scotland, Wolverhampton Art Gallery, The Whitworth, University of Manchester.

Sunday 16 November, **J.M.W Turner and John Constable: Rivals or Colleagues?**

Anne Lyles



The Chain Pier by Constable, (detail), 1827



The Chain Pier by Turner, (detail), c.1828

Such comparisons between famous artist contemporaries – one thinks also of Gainsborough and Reynolds or Picasso and Matisse – can be illuminating. However they can also be misleading, which is arguably the

case for Turner and Constable who are too often seen as rivals rather than as artistic colleagues. They were both striving for the promotion of a new type of British landscape art. Coinciding with the exhibition at Tate Britain which will directly compare the work of the two artists, in the 250th year of their birth - this lecture will seek to discuss their differing characters and art at the same time as investigating their shared goals.

Anne Lyles is an art historian and independent curator specialising in late 18th and early 19th century British landscape painting. She worked at Tate Britain for twenty-five years, and has co-curated, and contributed to the catalogues of, many exhibitions on the art of J.M.W. Turner, John Constable and British watercolours. These include *The Great Age of British Watercolours 1750-1880* (Royal Academy of Arts, London, and National Gallery of Art, Washington 1993); the Constable exhibition in Paris in 2002 selected by Lucian Freud; *Constable: The Great Landscapes* (Tate Britain, London, National Gallery of Art, Washington and Huntington Art Gallery, San Marino, 2006); and *Late Constable* (Royal Academy of Arts, London, 2021)

Sunday 7 December, **The Art of Christmas: Beyond the Familiar**
Colin Wiggins



The Annunciation by Paula Rego, 2002
courtesy Nick Willing

The clichés of Christmas iconography, with angels and shepherds and kings and camels, have become so familiar we tend to take them all for granted. This talk will investigate the different and often surprising ways that artists have illustrated these beautiful and amazing stories - and not by any means always from the approved Christian texts. Do we know, for example, how long the Virgin Mary was in labour? Did she have any help in delivering her miraculous child? As for the ox and the ass, they are not mentioned in the Gospels at all, so what are they doing there? And how did the Holy Family escape from Herod's murderous soldiers? Apart from

all that, how did Saint Nicholas transform into the ruddy-faced Santa Claus?

These stories have given artists a wonderful source of subject matter and we will be looking at works from all periods, up to and including our own time with artists such as Paula Rego and Peter Blake.

Colin Wiggins is an art historian, curator and practising printmaker. He worked at the National Gallery for over 30 years, retiring in 2016. He was responsible for the Associate Artist scheme, which invited artists such as Paula Rego, Ana Maria Pacheco and Michael Landy to become involved in the life of the Gallery and to exhibit their work there. He also curated exhibitions of work by, amongst others, Frank Auerbach, Lucian Freud and Bridget Riley.

You are warmly invited to a Christmas Drinks party in the Upper Hall after this lecture.

AUTUMN ESTATE WALK



© English Heritage

Thursday, 6 November, **Autumn at Kenwood**

A walk with Kenwood's Head Gardener. Meet at North Front of Kenwood House at 10.30am.

This walk is free for Friends of Kenwood; non-members £5.

Book in advance (essential) by emailing info@friendsofkenwood.org.uk

EVENT

Wednesday 10 September, **Friends Annual Evening Event**

We are hosting a Sargent-themed evening with a talk, live music and dinner in the Orangery. Further details to follow.

VISITS

We are visiting places in the London area which are accessible by public transport.

Visit booking: *To book a place for a visit, please use the Eventbrite or other link which can be found on the Lectures/Events page of our website, or look out for the link in our regular email news update.*

Thursday 26 June, **Curator Talk, Tour & Drinks Party – Heiress: Sargent's American Portraits**



Please join us for a Curator Talk, Visit to the Exhibition and Drinks Reception from 6pm to 8pm in the Upper Hall at Kenwood House.

Drinks are kindly sponsored by Authentique Epicerie & Bar, one of Kentish Town's great destinations!

The cost is £20 plus a small admin fee and can be booked on our website.