

NEWSLETTER

The Arts Society of West Suffolk

Zoom Special Interest Days : Tues 4th, Weds 5th and Thurs 6th May The British Empire and Imperial India Dr John Stevens

Following the success of our Special Interest Days in March, the programmed single lecture for May will be replaced by three Zoom lectures on The British Empire and Imperial India presented by Dr John Stevens over three successive days: **Images of the British Empire, Imperial Calcutta: Arts and Architecture**, and **The Art of Rabindranath Tagore**. Lecture synopses are included on the second page of this Newsletter.

Ice Age Art: The First Artists in Europe Mark Patton

Our speaker this month, Mark Patton, is an historical novelist, biographer and archaeologist. Born in Jersey, Mark studied Archaeology and Anthropology at Cambridge University followed by a PhD at UCL. He became the Curator of Archaeology for the Jersey Museum Services in 1990 and has since taught at Trinity College Carmarthen and at the Universities of Greenwich and Westminster.

Mark described how fully modern humans, genetically identical to ourselves, first entered Europe between 30 and 50 thousand years ago. He then explored various types of art produced by hunter-gatherers between 50 and 15 thousand years ago including paintings, drawings and sculptures on the walls of caves, abstract patterns and portable sculptures in bone, ivory and stone. In order to preserve the drawings, most Ice Age caves



are now closed with little or no access permitted. However, the caves are well documented and Mark was fortunate to have explored some when they were originally open for guided viewing. Cave drawings in France and Spain depict mainly hunted animals including bison, rhinoceroses and reindeer but also birds, fish, hyenas, and horses. Some images served as warnings of the speed or ferocity of the beasts that may be encountered within the caves. Handprints were also outlined on the walls indicating the number of inhabitants. Footprints of both humans and animals were discovered on the ground. Drawings and paintings were created with charcoal and red or yellow ochre mineral iron pigment. Bone and wooden tools were often decorated with animal carvings, examples of which may be seen in the British Museum.

Sculptures were predominantly faceless female forms ('Venus figurines') with unknown significance, often made of clay. These were found widely dispersed through Spain, Italy, Siberia, Bulgaria and Russia, evidencing a much travelled population at that time.

REVISED EUSTON HALL OPEN DAYS

Gardens only: 10th to 16th May
House Tours, Gardens and the Old Kitchen open for Tea, Coffee and Snacks: 25th to 31st May and 18th to 24th September

Visits must be booked in advance and are subject to Covid-19 rules at the time.

ADDITIONAL ZOOM TALK

Tuesday 15th June 2021 11 am
Walking Tour of Venice



Venice Registered Tour Guide, **Luisella Romeo**, will take us on a virtual tour of Venice, both along the off-the-beaten track paths and the major attractions of the city.

Luisella was born, raised and studied in Venice, where she gained a degree in Foreign Languages and Literatures.

She perceives the labyrinth of Venice as a crossroads of human stories to narrate, and hopes her passion for her job will be apparent as we discover Venice together.



CHURCH RECORDING

Our Society is continuing to support local church recorder activities. No longer supported by TAS, the teams have formed their own charity to allow their work to continue. You can find out about the Church Recording Society by visiting their [website www.churchrecordingsociety.org.uk](http://www.churchrecordingsociety.org.uk), now up and running. We are pleased to have made our normal donation through this new front door. Sue Medcalf's team have almost completed Elveden Church and are taking on Lakenheath next at the personal request of the Bishop. We look forward to attending that Benefice's presentation and also that for the Parish of West Stow when rules allow. A lot of work for David Medcalf and help from TAS in setting up this new charity! We wish them well.

April 2021



NEWSLETTER

The Arts Society of West Suffolk

Special Interest Days 4th, 5th and 6th May 2020

The British Empire and Imperial India: Images, Architecture and Arts Dr John Stevens

Dr John Stevens is a Research Associate at SOAS, University of London, and a member of the academic staff at the SOAS South Asia Institute. His PhD in History is from University College London. He teaches British Imperial history, Indian history and Bengali language, and is a regular visitor to India and Bangladesh. He publishes widely in the fields of British and Indian history.

How did the British view themselves and their subjects in the era of imperialism? How did imperial subjects view the British? This study day considers these questions by exploring a range of images, buildings, objects and art forms from across the British Empire. Beginning with a broad view of the empire and imperial art in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, we will go on to focus more closely on imperial India. We will consider the arts and architecture of the vibrant capital city of Calcutta, the 'second city' of the British Empire throughout the nineteenth century. We will then take a detailed look at the life and art of one of India's cultural giants, Rabindranath Tagore.

The study day includes the following three lectures:

- Images of the British Empire
- Imperial Calcutta: Arts and Architecture
- The Art of Rabindranath Tagore

Lecture synopses:

Images of the British Empire

At the turn of the twentieth century, the British Empire held sway over approximately one quarter of the total population of the world. British imperial power was projected through a variety of artistic mediums, from fine portraiture and grand imperial buildings to more popular forms of imagery. British artists also produced countless images of people from all over the globe who had become subjects of British rule. Through considering a variety of paintings, buildings and objects from across the empire, this lecture provides a fascinating insight into the ways in which the British viewed themselves and their subjects in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Imperial Calcutta: Arts and Architecture

Calcutta was the second city of the British Empire and a hub of cultural and artistic production throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This lecture provides an overview of the arts (poetry, theatre, literature, song) and architecture of this extraordinary city, which was India's capital until 1911. At the epicentre of the 'Bengal renaissance', Calcutta played a central role in shaping the arts and culture of modern India, as a huge variety of artists sought to interpret India's classical heritage in new ways, and to combine this heritage with Western cultural forms. This lecture examines how Calcutta's arts and architecture were affected by British rule, and explores the fascinating ways in which Indian artists viewed the British in India.

The Art of Rabindranath Tagore

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) is arguably the most important Indian artistic figure of the modern era. The first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, claimed that he had two gurus: Gandhi and Tagore. A renowned poet, novelist, composer and painter, Tagore is also the only person in history to have written the national anthems for two countries (India and Bangladesh). He became a global sensation when he won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913, the first non-European to do so. This lecture provides an introduction to Tagore's remarkable life and work, including his novels, poetry, songs and paintings. It also explores the role Tagore's art played in the story of India's fight for independence.