

March 2021



NEWSLETTER

The Arts Society of West Suffolk

Monthly Zoom Talk: Tuesday 6th April 2021 10.45 am Ice Age Art: The First Artists in Europe Mark Patton

We explore the various types of art produced by hunter-gatherers between 50 and 15 thousand years ago including paintings, drawings and sculptures on the wall of caves, abstract patterns and portable sculptures in bone, ivory and stone. We also explore the social and cultural context of Europe's earliest art.

There is light at the end of the tunnel! The Prime Minister's roadmap for the easing of lockdown must bring welcome anticipation of a less restricted way of life. Although it will take some time, we may now look forward to brighter days. In the meantime, we will continue our excellent monthly Zoom lectures, which have attracted good audiences and have obviously been much enjoyed by many. The success of the recent special interest lectures held over three days has prompted us to arrange another such event in May when Dr John Alexander Stevens will deliver a presentation of **The British Empire and Imperial India** over three days instead of his single programmed lecture. Further details of these Special Interest Days are included on Page 2 of this Newsletter. We hope that these additional talks, at no extra cost, go some way to compensate for our being unable to hold our customary Study Days, due to the pandemic.



Last month's three Special Interest lectures took us on **A Journey Through the Imperial Wardrobe**. David Rosier spent many years in Hong Kong and worked in China. He assembled a personal collection of approximately 700 mainly Qing dynasty Imperial related textiles and accessories and has lectured widely. Having already supplied us with a background paper on his intricate and many faceted subject, David treated us to an in-depth account of the history, symbolism, status and composition of the many varied items of clothing and footwear worn in the Chinese imperial court particularly between 1644 and 1911. Lavishly illustrated throughout, his talks were an amazing insight, not only into the meaning of the beautiful designs and embroidery but also the inflexible rules of hierarchy governing the wearing of each item. David's

accomplished presentation and passion for his subject, rising from many years of research and careful collection, provided us with a highly memorable three day event.

VISITS: Please note that our visit to **BLETCHLEY PARK** has now been postponed until **Tuesday 12th October 2021**

David Wright, with 30 years in the world of wine as a retailer and importer, delivered our March talk on **A Brief Story of Wine**. David has publicly presented tastings and talks on wine and is an Arts Society accredited lecturer. David described how wine has been part of society for over 7,000 years and told of its origin and appearance across the Mediterranean and through Europe. There is rich evidence of the role wine has played in these societies and how it became an important component of faith, well-being and festivity. David illustrated the relationship between art and wine in a variety of slides including pictures of kvevris of Georgia in 5,000 BC, tomb drawings from ancient Egypt, wine ware from Greece, extracts from Cato's de Agri Cultura (possibly the oldest original Latin prose in existence), the Thermopolia of Pompeii, the spectacular medieval building of Hospices de Beaune, paintings, cartoons and wine labels, all of which were relevant to how wine has become commonplace. David considers wine to be an essential component to a contented life; a sentiment with which many of us would agree!



Following his talk, David's suggestions for further reading on the subject of the history of wine were:

Wine - social and cultural history by Rod Phillips
From Noah to Now The Story of Wine - Hugh Johnson.

EUSTON HALL GARDEN OPEN DAYS

Duchess Olivia sends her apologies for the cancellation of the planned Open Days, due to the most recent guidelines. The plan is to add some days in September and October at the end of the school holidays.



Since August 2020 The Arts Society has offered a once a month **Zoom Wine Tasting** run by David Wright with an invited wine producer, exporter or expert also joining the event. The purpose is educational and an opportunity to taste wines with the person who knows most about them. There is an accompanying slide show depicting the origin of the wines, a profile of the wines and winemaker, images of the vineyards and region, statistics and a couple of quiz questions for fun. Full details can be found at www.wine.theartsociety.org

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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.