



January 14th 2026

John Benjamin – At the Sign of the Falcon

Discover the exquisite craftsmanship of H.G. Murphy, whose innovative jewellery and metalwork were overshadowed by the post-war shift to modernism. Trained by renowned goldsmith, Henry Wilson, Murphy mastered techniques like enamelling and niello, creating extraordinary works now ripe for rediscovery. A rare glimpse into lost pre-war brilliance.



February 11th

Antonia Gatward-Cevizli – Carpets from the East in European Paintings: An Interwoven History

Explore how Islamic carpets, richly depicted in European paintings, reveal a fascinating story of taste, status, and global trade. Spanning the 14th to 17th centuries, this lecture uncovers how these luxurious textiles journeyed across continents—woven into both daily life and high art throughout Europe.



March 11th

Mark Ovenden – How Great Design Influenced the Railways

All aboard for a nostalgic journey through the golden age of railway design—from iconic 1930s travel posters to the sleek BR Double-Arrow symbol. Explore how British railways set global trends in graphics, architecture and innovation, while celebrating classics like the Tube map and glimpsing the future of rail design.



April 8th

Isabelle Kent – Diego Velázquez: Painter and Courtier to Philip IV

Step into the refined yet rigid world of Philip IV's court, where Diego Velázquez painted beyond protocol to reveal the humanity behind the hierarchy. From kings to jesters, this lecture explores his intimate, insightful portraits—culminating in a closer look at his mysterious and masterful Las Meninas.



May 13th

Lynne Gibson – Alchemy and Adventure: A History of Exotic Colours and Poisonous Pigments

Before synthetic dyes, colour came at a price—sometimes deadly. This vivid lecture uncovers the exotic, toxic, and mysterious origins of pigments: lapis from distant mountains, cochineal from insects, and alchemists' perilous concoctions. Discover a world where colour was treasure, trade and a closely guarded secret.

THE ARTS SOCIETY MID CORNWALL



June 10th

Cindy Polemis – John Singer Sargent and Fashion

John Singer Sargent reigned supreme in the Gilded Age, captivating high society with portraits that dazzled in both style and substance. This lecture explores how Sargent used fashion not just to flatter, but to reveal identity, crafting images that were as psychologically rich as they were visually stunning.

Lady Agnew of Lochnaw, 1892 (detail) National Galleries of Scotland.



September 9th

James Vaux – Tinker, Tailor, Canvas, Chair: how Modernism became a Cold War secret agent

Discover the secret history of how the U.S. wielded art as a Cold War weapon and the CIA's covert use of Abstract Expressionism and Mid-Century Modern design to sway European opinion, turning culture into propaganda in one of art history's most surprising chapters.



October 14th

James Wright – Historic Building Myth-busting

Ancient buildings whisper stories—but how many are true? This playful and revealing lecture investigates widely believed myths, from spiral staircases and secret tunnels to devil-proof doors and ship timber tales. Explore the facts behind the folklore and discover what really lies behind Britain's most enduring architectural legends.



November 12th

Sandy Burnett – Christmas in Bach's Leipzig: the Christmas Oratorio of 1734/5

Join Sandy Burnett for a festive journey into Bach's Leipzig, as he explores the joyous brilliance of the Christmas Oratorio. With decades of experience interpreting Bach's sacred music, Burnett brings alive the rich textures, forms, and spirit of a masterpiece that still resonates with wonder nearly 300 years on.



December 9th

Emma Watts – The Value of Art

What gives art its value? This thought-provoking lecture explores the many ways we measure worth—culturally, socially and financially. From timeless masterpieces to black-market deals, and from shifting tastes to global repatriation debates, discover how art is treasured, traded and sometimes contested, across centuries and continents.

A Peep at Christies 1799 by James Gillray (detail)