



# RADLETT ART SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Issue 261

## Chairman's Report. May 2026

I hope this newsletter finds you all well and looking forward to Summer and some warmer weather. We extend a warm welcome to new members to the Society and hope that you enjoy the lecture programme for this year and take part in the other activities offered by the Society.

I am writing this report in April before our first live lecture for this year, which will be given by Val Woodgate at Radlett Reform Synagogue. We continue to use "Zoom" for our lectures throughout the year for those of you who are unable to get to the synagogue or prefer to stay at home.

Our Annual Art Exhibition is the weekend 6th - 7th June, at the Radlett Village Institute, and we look forward to exhibiting a wide selection of art works by many of our members.

The members private preview evening of the exhibition is on June 5th from 7.00pm - 8.30 pm with drinks and nibbles. We invite all members and their guests to join us, have a glass of wine and a chat, together with the option of buying a piece of art if you wish.

Please do come along.

Our exhibition will be open from 10.00 - 5.00 on Saturday 6th June and 10.00 - 4.00 on Sunday the 7th June.

Anna or I would love to hear from any member who would like to do a stint of stewarding on either of these days.

Over the same weekend The Radlett Museum which is adjacent to the Institute will again be open.



This year, our annual 5 day/ 4 night tour takes us to "The Castles, Historic Houses and Gardens of Kent" from September 1st-5th. It is a wonderful opportunity to meet and spend time with other members of the Society, and of course appreciate the art and heritage of the County of Kent. The closing date for the holiday is officially April 31st, but if any of you are still thinking about it, then please contact Tailored Travel directly.

The Thursday workshop continues to be popular. This summer term at the Institute will cease at the end of June, but we shall then go "en plein air" in the environs of Radlett until September 3rd when we return to the Institute for the autumn term.

And finally, a date for your diary - on November 22nd we have organised a painting study day with artist Sue Gray. It will be from 10.00 until 4.00 at Radlett Village Institute, and will focus on Seascapes. More about this nearer the time.

The drawing of Brian Hardy was created by Inga Armstrong at the life workshop on 26th February.

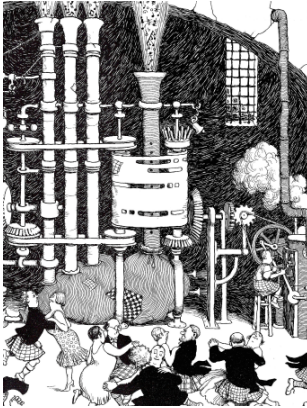
My best wishes to you all

Gill Cooper  
Chairman

## Lecture News

**May 7th - Cartoons and Contraptions: the Wonderful World of Heath Robinson by Barry Venning,**

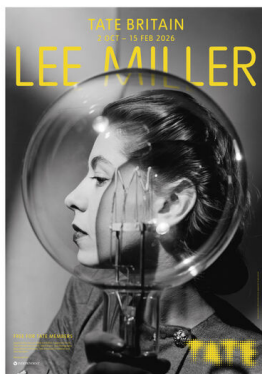
**Live at Radlett Reform Synagogue 118 Watling St, WD77AA. 7.30 for 8.00 + on Zoom**



W. Heath Robinson became famous for designing bizarrely complicated devices for the simplest of tasks like wart removal or pancake making. He and his gadgets became so famous that Bletchley Park named one of their wartime code-breaking machines after him. Later still, some of the contraptions in Wallace and Gromit's *The Wrong Trousers* are based on a gadget filled house that he made for the Ideal Home Show in 1934. Heath Robinson was also a fine painter, an outstanding literary illustrator and a brilliant satirist, who poked gentle fun at modern life in cartoons that are still hilarious...

**June 11<sup>th</sup> Lee Miller; Artist & Photographer by Frank Woodgate**

**Live at Radlett Reform Synagogue, 118 Watling St, WD77AA 7.30 for 8.00 + on Zoom**



Lee Miller went from being a sought-after artists' model to being one of the most important photographers of the 20th century. Wife of Surrealist painter Roland Penrose and friend of Pablo Picasso, Lee Miller went from being a sought-after artists' model to being one of the most important photographers of the 20th century. After a difficult childhood and a successful career in fashion, she was one of the few female war reporters during WW2 and also produced some fascinating Surrealist photographs. Reflecting on the recent retrospective exhibition at Tate Britain.

Lee Miller exhibition poster Tate Britain 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct - 15<sup>th</sup> Feb 2026

**July 16<sup>th</sup> A new art history lecturer, Jessica Fahy, speaks about 'Frida Kahlo at the Tate Modern'**

**Live Radlett Reform Synagogue, 118 Watling St, WD77AA 7.30 for 8.00 pm + Zoom**



Frida Kahlo, *Untitled (self-portrait with thorn necklace and hummingbird)* 1940.

The fascinating work of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo resonates powerfully with audiences today arguably even more than it did in her lifetime. Her paintings are relatively few in number, often small in scale, and frequently focused on a single subject—herself. These bold colourful artworks have become some of the most recognisable images in twentieth-century art. Born in Coyoacán in 1907, Kahlo's life was shaped by illness, injury, and profound personal experiences that she translated directly into her art. After a serious accident at the age of eighteen, she began painting during a long period of recovery, developing a visual language that combined careful observation with symbolic imagery.

Kahlo's life was also closely intertwined with post-revolutionary Mexico and with the artist Diego Rivera who she married twice! As his wife and a woman artist she was often overlooked by the art world of the time and it is fascinating to see how her legacy has become greater than his over time. We will look at how Kahlo's work emerged from this complex intersection of personal experience as well national identity, and modern art, and consider how her self-portraits function not only as records of her life, but as carefully constructed works of artistic expression.

**Exhibition at Tate Modern 25<sup>th</sup> June 2026–3<sup>rd</sup> January 2027** We are hoping to arrange an exciting trip to this exhibition in October with a background talk and small group tour by our own Tate guide and RAS member Anita Greene.

### **Change of lecture subject:-**

There is an exciting exhibition opening at the V&A - 'Schiaparelli: Fashion Becomes Art' from 21st March to 1<sup>st</sup> November 2026.

Frances says, Because of this exhibition, I have changed my emphasis of my lecture this year from the original suggested 'Textile transition from craft to fine art' to 'Schiaparelli: Fashion Becomes Art'. This exhibition excites me and coincides closely with my own research and interests.

### **Dates for your Diary**

**Radlett Art Society Summer Exhibition** - June 5th - 7th at Radlett Village Institute

Closing date for submissions 22nd May. Hand in on 5th, hanging and Private View, 6th & 7th Open to the Public.

Further details and submission forms have been sent. Please contact me if you need them sending again Anna.cross@me.com

### **A Selection of Exhibitions of Interest - not all related to RAS lectures this year**

Seurat and the Sea at The Courtauld Gallery - 13th February - 17th May

James McNeill Whistler at Tate Britain - 21st May sent- 27th September

Frida Kahlo at Tate Modern - 25th June - 3rd January

'Schiaparelli: Fashion Becomes Art' at The V&A - 21st March to 1<sup>st</sup> November 2026.

Painting Pals - RAS Artists, Inga Armstrong and Anna Cross at The Radlett Centre foyer and cafe area 1st - 31st May

St. Albans Art Society Summer Exhibition at Upper Dagnall Street Baptist Church, St Albans AL3 5EE, (including work by some RAS members) - 22nd - 25th July

**IAN SWANKIE GUIDED WALK Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> June 2026 -**



**The wonderful tour guide of London (and currently Australian lecturer).**

**Ian has promised RAS members another exciting themed walk around London to take in the best of our English Sculpture and Graffiti. Watch out for full details and prices nearer the date**

## **Meet the Artist**

This time we had the pleasure of being “in conversation” with someone very well known to you all; Anna Cross. Once we had found our way through the door into Phillie's café – more difficult than you would think! we enjoyed a beverage and learnt something of Anna's artistic journey.

Anna, when did you first start doing art? – At junior school but quickly found out that I couldn't draw! Only my patterns were put up on the school wall. At secondary school I wanted to do art O level I did too well at Maths, Physics and Chemistry so I had to do science and the school couldn't timetable art with science.

Did you do art in your spare time? – Over the years I did a variety of crafty and arty activities. When I first moved to London I did evening classes in dress design, machine embroidery and woodwork. I still have a bathroom cabinet that I made in woodwork. I also did tapestry and cross-stitch and decided that I wanted to make my own designs.

Do you come from a family of artists? - My father was a potter in later life and, as a Chemist, he was most interested in the effect of glazes. My mother was crafty rather than arty and she did a lot of knitting and in later life had a large weaving loom.

When did you start pursuing your love of painting? - In the early 80's my husband suggested that I should do an art summer school so, while he looked after the children, I went on a course entitled “Drawing for the Terrified, Painting for the Petrified”. On the first morning we did graphite drawing which I hated but in the afternoon we used coloured pencils and I loved it. After that I did many summer schools at Missenden Abbey. The courses were on a variety of topics such as Textile Art as well as Colour Theory and Abstraction and also Stained Glass. When I retired from working in the NHS, I went to regular classes with Jan Munro. Initially I learnt quite traditional techniques with her but over the years she encouraged me to be more loose and experimental.

The big turning point for me was full retirement when I decided I would at last have time to pursue my love of painting in more depth, visit galleries and go to the theatre. This happened to coincide with Covid! So going anywhere was off the agenda. I began to do many on-line courses which I still do today. I have greatly enjoyed many classes including with Peter Keegan, Lewis Noble and Kerry Harding as well as classes from St Ives School of Art - live and online. YouTube is also an amazing source of information and inspiration.

How do you feel your work has developed over the years?

-I have always loved colour, that is my thing. My early work was pictorial although always loose. I have moved towards the abstract and have become more expressive. I am exploring seascapes at the moment and am experimenting with mixed media. I have tried out many mediums over the years, my favourites now are acrylic and gouache and mixed media. I think it is very important to evolve, there is always something new to try.



Who are some of your favourite artists? and whose work would you rather not go to see?! - I love Turner and Kurt Jackson and Paul Klee and all the Impressionists. I'm not keen on Damian Hurst – I think his work is too gimmicky, and Beryl Cook – although I can see she was a talented artist – I find her work too obvious.

How long have you been a member of the Radlett Art Society? - I joined the Society in the 90's and exhibited at some of the Summer Exhibitions. My first contribution was deemed

too big at A1 size so had to be displayed on an easel. One year I was amazed to win a John Apthorp prize. My son, Owen, also exhibited at the Summer Exhibition – three large red abstract paintings. Now I am involved in many aspects of the Society on the committee; I am Membership Secretary, I organize the various exhibitions – the Summer Exhibition and the exhibition in the Radlett Centre, and I organize the publicity including the displays in the Harpenden Building Society window. I also prepare the newsletter.

Finally.....did you know Anna once rode a circus horse in a Big Top!.....it wasn't a full time occupation as she was only 12 at the time.

Thank you for all your work for the Society Anna and for sharing your artistic journey with us.  
Interview conducted by Cherrie Chester and Inga Armstrong.

## **Lecture Report -**

### Joseph Wright of Derby : From the shadows and much more. Lecture by Claire Ford Wille on 19 February 2026.

In this interesting and well-illustrated talk, familiar speaker Claire Ford Wille framed her address round the current exhibition of Joseph Wright's chiaroscuro-style 'Candlelight' paintings at the National Gallery. These include well-known pictures such as *Experiment on a Bird; the Air Pump* of 1768 and a *Philosopher giving a Lecture with an Orrery in which a Lamp is put in place of the Sun* (1764-66). These works are notable for the striking light-and-dark effects derived from placement of bright artificial light in the centre of the scene, vividly lighting up certain parts, contrasted with inky darkness in the periphery. Frequently the edge of the picture also featured a natural light from the setting sun or the moon as a secondary source.

However, as she pointed out, Wright's career also embraced other quite different subjects and techniques.

Born into a comfortable Derby family in 1734. After two spells apprenticed to Thomas Hudson in London he spent the remainder of his life in his home city. He soon obtained numerous commissions from newly-wealthy upper middle class patrons in the Midlands for their portraits. His *Portrait of Anne Bateman* in 1755 is his earliest-known private commission, and *Mr. & Mrs. William Chase* (1760) his first-known conversation piece.

His portraiture displays a keen characterisation of the sitters, and the engagement between them in group works. Also very evident is skill in depiction of sumptuous clothing, in particular fabrics and lace. An example is the group portrait of *James & Mary Shuttleworth with one of their daughters* (1764).

There are pointers towards much influence from Dutch masters. Works from other countries were beginning to be available through the new technique of Mezzotint engraving. He was plainly interested in the fast-developing science of his time and the consequent burgeoning Industrial Revolution and new Industries, e.g. *An Iron Forge* (1772).

*Wright travelled to Italy and discovered Landscape painting in the 1770s, and devoted the remainder of his life to it. Italian subjects predominated, such as the vivid Eruption of Mount Vesuvius. These works were very forward-looking and evoke the subtly lighting and colours of Edwardian landscape artists, e.g. a Grotto in the Gulf of Salerno.*

Having seen and enjoyed the National Gallery exhibition largely devoted to his Candlelight paintings, it was fascinating to see Claire place these in the context if a much more varied career.

Edward Cross

## ‘The History of Art – Changing Ideas of Beauty’ Lecture by Linda Collins – on 25th March 2026

Linda’s lecture was focused on the history of art and changing ideas of beauty. She used her extensive knowledge of the National Gallery to select a large number of portraits and paintings to illustrate the topic for us.

Linda began by taking us through rooms at the National Gallery, which have recently undergone a re-grouping of their paintings chosen for their themes rather than chronology. Starting from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, she explained the changes in style and lighting in Italian Renaissance portraits, reflecting outer beauty but also inner virtue. As we progressed through the lecture Linda gave fascinating insights of artistic representations of beauty, wealth and power, and how the use of insignia, costume and perspective was used to give an impression of the sitter’s status,

professionalism and confidence. There was a considerable difference in interpretation according to the period that the portraits were painted, reflecting how tastes changed according to style, politics and fashion and also location, for example, ideas of beauty in Northern Europe differed markedly from those of Florence or Venice.

Linda highlighted the importance of the framing of the paintings, with interesting insights into the materials used, construction and decoration, and how the framing contributed and enhanced the portrait within.

Linda chose to illustrate her lecture with a wonderful variety of paintings and artists including, Vigee le Brun, Van Dyke, Gentileschi, Rubens, Gainsborough, Jan Steen, Renoir, Degas, Van Gogh and several others. Insights were given into the historical background, the lives of the subjects and stories behind the portraits, which made the characters truly come alive. Linda explained how the artists constructed their paintings, making comparisons between them and their different styles, and drawing our attention to details such as lighting, colour and skin tone.

Linda's observations and guidance through her topic gave us a wonderful insight into the changing ideas of beauty through the ages, and I for one would like to return to the National Gallery to revisit these paintings with the new insights Linda gave us.

Carmel Byers

## Summer Exhibition Reminder

Calling ALL Artists.

Please remember to submit your art work by May 22nd.

Contact me at [anna.cross@me.com](mailto:anna.cross@me.com) if you need any help with the forms.

This is our Society's major event of the year. Please make sure that you are part of it.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Anna