



2026 LECTURE SERIES

2026 LECTURERS



JOHN SWAINSTON

Born in London, John Swainston moved to Australia in 1979 and worked for 50 years in the photo industry, including 24 years as MD of Maxwell Optical Industries. A former president of AIPP and PICA, he has exhibited his work widely and published several

books. He now lectures, writes and contributes to photography organisations. Now, with *I Will Lift Mine Eyes*, he explores England's great cathedrals, blending history, architecture and faith into a powerful visual journey.



IAN SWANKIE

A Londoner with a contagious passion for art and architecture, Ian works as an official guide at Tate Modern, Tate Britain, Guildhall Art Gallery and St Paul's Cathedral. He also offers freelance tours around London. Since 2012, he has led a popular weekly independent art

lecture group in his hometown of Richmond in West London. Ian is an Accredited Lecturer for The Arts Society and a Freeman of the Worshipful Company of Art Scholars, one of the City of London's well-known livery companies.



PENNY GAY

Penny Gay, Professor Emerita of English and Drama at the University of Sydney, taught for 35 years. Her books include *As She Likes It*, *Jane Austen and the Theatre* and *The Cambridge Introduction to Shakespeare's Comedies*.

Passionate about Shakespeare and theatre history, she continues to explore archives, review productions and lead lively literary discussion groups.



JOANNE RHYMER

Jo completed an MA in History of Art at UCL (1997) and held senior learning roles at the National Gallery. She has taught for Tate, the Hayward Gallery, Sotheby's Institute, and the National Portrait Gallery, and leads art tours in the UK and abroad. Currently teaching

for Cambridge's Institute of Continuing Education, the Wallace Collection, and the V&A, her focus is 19th- and early 20th-century French art and the practice of sustained visual observation.



MARY SHARP

Mary is a broadcaster and teacher with expertise in literature and drama. She produced leading BBC Radio 4 programmes and later became a Commissioning Editor. She taught and led a Sixth Form at a top girls' grammar school before founding *Opening Up Literature*, offering adult courses in Shakespeare, creative

writing and classical stories. She also teaches Bridge.



MARK COTTLE

Born on the Isles of Scilly and educated at Truro School in Cornwall and the University of Birmingham, Mark Cottle has built a career in education and training, both locally and internationally. He has lectured at Exeter College on Medieval and Tudor history, St Mark's & St John's University College in Plymouth and at the University of Bath on Anglo-Saxon and medieval England. Currently, Mark manages two small companies that offer training and study breaks.



MARIE CONTE-HELM

Professor Conte-Helm, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, is a long-standing Arts Society Lecturer with degrees in Art History and Asian Art. She was Executive Director of the UK-Japan 21st Century Group and Director General of the Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation. Widely

published, she lectures globally and at sea with Viking Cruises. She received an OBE in 2011 and Japan's Order of the Rising Sun in 2019.



ANTONY PENROSE

For 45 years, Antony has preserved and promoted the work of his parents, Lee Miller and Roland Penrose. With his daughter Ami, he co-directs the Lee Miller Archives and Penrose Collection at Farley Farm. Their work appears in major UK exhibitions. Antony has lectured worldwide, published books, produced documentaries and directed the film *LEE*, starring Kate Winslet.

ArtsNational Hunter (formerly ADFAS) is one of 38 societies in Australia. We offer eight high quality lectures each year by recognised Australian and International experts in visual arts, theatre, film and literature.

Find out more www.artsnationalhunter.org.au

BEING A MEMBER

Joining **ArtsNational Hunter** means becoming part of a lively community that supports local arts, broadens access to arts education and encourages volunteer projects. Through our **Young Arts Project**, we foster the passion of younger community members, helping local primary and secondary schools develop artistic skills and appreciation. We warmly welcome new members and sincerely thank our current members for their ongoing support and dedication to the arts in our region. Together, we are creating a stronger, more inspired community through **ArtsNational Hunter**.

For more information visit
www.artsnationalhunter.org.au

Email: members@artsnationalhunter.org.au

ABN 50 525 651 526



LECTURE PROGRAM 2026

ArtsNational Hunter lectures are held at the **Performing Arts Centre, Cessnock – PACC.**

NEW DAY & TIME: Lectures will be on a **TUESDAY** at 6pm. Entry from 5:30pm - fully seated by 5:45pm.

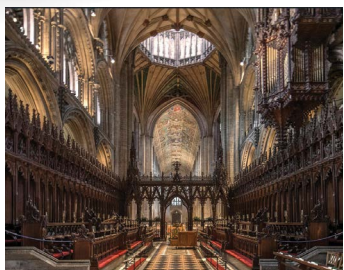
Prior notice of attendance to our membership secretary is recommended for catering purposes.

EMAIL: members@artsnationalhunter.org.au

Please check our website, artsnationalhunter.org.au or Facebook for regular updates.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP: \$180 (8 lectures)

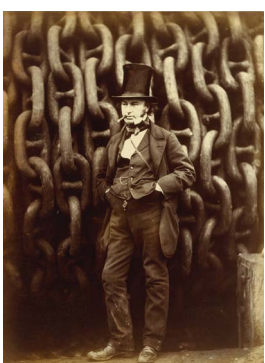
VISITORS WELCOME: \$35 per lecture



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17 **I WILL LIFT MINE EYES** by John Swainston

In *I Will Lift Mine Eyes*, John traces the spread of Christianity from the Mediterranean to Britain. He covers Augustine's mission, early Saxon churches, the Norman transition and the

peak of cathedral building in England and Wales. He discusses architectural breakthroughs, construction challenges (including tower collapses, fires and lightning), and how church and royal power influenced the design of these significant medieval structures.



TUESDAY, MARCH 17 **THE BRILLIANCE OF BRUNEL - THE MAN WHO BUILT THE MODERN WORLD** by Ian Swankie

British people and visitors to the UK still find themselves amongst the infrastructure created by Isambard Kingdom Brunel. In the 19th century he changed the face of the British landscape with his ground-breaking projects, including railways, bridges, tunnels, ships and grand buildings, such as the

magnificent Paddington Station. Brunel merged art with engineering and science, was a pioneer and a revolutionary - and he was brilliant.



TUESDAY, APRIL 7 **WHAT HAPPENED TO SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS WHEN WOMEN TOOK TO THE STAGE?** by Professor Penny Gay

When Charles II returned from exile in 1660 he reopened

London's theatres after 18 years of Puritan bans. For the first time women could act on stage and Shakespeare's plays were reshaped with French spectacle and style. Some changes were bizarre, others brilliant, but all transformed how audiences saw his work. This lecture, with vivid images, explores how those bold 17th-century experiments influenced Shakespearean drama for centuries.



TUESDAY, MAY 19 **NEW VISIONS: PARIS AND IMPRESSIONISM** by Joanne Rhymer

During the reign of Napoleon III, Paris was transformed with new boulevards, apartments, and public buildings replacing older districts. Department stores, theatres and cafés flourished, creating a vibrant, modern city which for the emerging

Impressionists provided novel motifs for modern paintings. Through artists such as Manet, Renoir, and Caillebotte, we'll explore how Paris's rapid urban change spurred new subjects, techniques and a revolutionary pictorial language that reshaped modern art.



TUESDAY, JULY 21 **IS THIS THE REAL LIFE: HOW WRITERS AND ARTISTS HAVE CHALLENGED OUR PERCEPTIONS OF REALITY** by Mary Sharp

When Lucy steps into Narnia, Harry Potter opens his letter, or Neo takes the red pill, they discover their worlds are only part of the truth. From Plato onwards, writers and artists have imagined other realms beyond the

everyday. This lecture examines what such stories reveal about how we perceive our lives and the profound desires that drive us to seek meaning beyond the ordinary.



TUESDAY, AUGUST 25 **THE TUDOR COURT AND ITS WORLD: THE PAINTINGS, DRAWINGS AND MINIATURES OF HOLBEIN AND HILLIARD** by Mark Cottle

The Tudor court comes vividly to life through the works of Hans Holbein under Henry VIII,

and Nicholas Hilliard under Elizabeth I. Together, they transformed the English art scene. Holbein set new standards in portraiture with his powerful drawings and delicate miniatures. Hilliard established the miniature as "England's greatest contribution to the art of the Renaissance" (Sir Roy Strong), a form that dominated until the advent of photography in the 1840s. Without them, English art would be far poorer.



TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14 **THE ARTS OF JAPAN: HIGHLIGHTS OF JAPANESE ART AND CULTURE** by Marie Conte-Helm

This lecture traces the development of Japanese art across history, encompassing painting, sculpture

and the applied arts. It explores Chinese and Western influences, aristocratic and military tastes, and the rise of Edo townsmen's culture. The impact of Zen Buddhism on gardens and the tea ceremony offers a further insight into the aesthetic. Japan's reopening to Western trade in the 19th century and the Meiji era's modernisation also shaped new artistic directions.



TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27 **LEE MILLER'S WAR: THE PHOTOJOURNALISM OF A COMBAT WAR PHOTOGRAPHER** by Antony Penrose

Lee Miller, believed to be the only woman combat photographer with Allied infantry in Europe, documented the Second World

War from D-Day to its aftermath. This lecture traces her journey through Normandy, St Malo, Paris, Germany, Buchenwald, Dachau and Hitler's Berghof, before covering post-war Austria and Hungary. Her story is told through her own words alongside the powerful photographs that captured both liberation and trauma.