



44th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Chairman's Report 2025-2026

We have had a great year! Huge thanks to Richard and Gill Dimbleby for encouraging us to continue to sponsor the Art Bytes competition at NSB, and we were thrilled that Chance in Year 9 won the National Secondary School prize.

As always none of our activities could take place without our hard working and dedicated Committee and you, our wonderful members. Thankyou. A special thanks to Marie-Anne Askew for providing an excellent programme of speakers in her first year as Programme Secretary.

We started off the year with an incredibly informative lecture on Banksy 'Fraud or Genius' given by Pepe Martinez. Despite a panic attack just before the lecture in the Sixth form Centre which was triggered by uncomfortable memories of school, Pepe delivered a cracking lecture on Banksy and informed us that there are no less than ten exhibitions world-wide on Banksy at this moment. (Ruth Corby, Loredana Harley and I subsequently went to one of these in Sussex Mansions in October).

We were deeply saddened to lose Sam Smart a few days before our first lecture of the new season. Sam had been Chair, Vice Chair and Events and Trips secretary for a number of years. Her calm, unflappable wisdom will be sorely missed by us all. Sam has been a mainstay on the Arts Society Committee and enabling the various trips and events to run smoothly. *We are honouring Sam's immense work for the NAS by dedicating "Fifty Treasures" to her.* Thank you to Ann Thorburn for taking up the reins from Sam and Jane White who retired from the Committee after long and tireless work arranging Trips and visits. A great time was had at Drayton House in May.

In October we had our second lecture, this time from Dr. Antonia Cevizli which was an outstanding tour of Bernini's sculptures largely commissioned by 8 different Popes in the seventeenth century. The slides showed the incredible sensitivity of Bernini's sculpture in modelling flesh and creating works of art viewed from all perspectives. The lecture certainly whetted our appetite to visit Rome.

On 4th November we held our Special Interest Day - the first to be run by Richard and Gill Dimbleby. As before we used the Abbey Centre at East Hunsbury with wonderful catering provided by Ruth Stokes. The speaker was Mrs Val Woodgate who has been giving lectures for 40 years. Her enthusiasm and fluency were exceptional. The subject was can 'Art change the world?' The question was not addressed until the end of the talks and was probably not in



her opinion. However, the three lectures demonstrated the passion and emotion of a wide variety of artists to topical issues. The illustrations and examples were amongst the less well known but were very relevant to the topic. The feedback was Excellent. 47 members were able to attend.

Our November talk was excellent and given by Dr Amy Lim on Stanley Spencer's painting at Cookham

December – Sarah Burles gave a fascinating talk on Hark the Herald Angels and their hierarchy in art through the ages.

January 26 Dr Caroline Shenton gave an excellent explanation of how national treasures were saved in anticipation of the Second World War - National Treasures Saving London's Galleries. The Talk provided fascinating photographic evidence and of the various personalities involved.

February. Jamie Hayes delivered his talk on Gilbert and Sullivan Their Topsy Turvy World. The difference in Gilbert and Sullivan's education and experience was revealing the Talk was informative and enjoyable, but Jamie sometimes spoke too quickly and got a little garbled.

March. Special Interest Day on 20th Century Theatre 3 Talks given by Giles Ramsay was considered Outstanding by all who attended. To cover show much of key playwrights and their response to the political and cultural mores of their time was really illuminating. Once again Ruth Stokes and East Hunsbury centre came up trumps.

March Toby Faber from Faber and Faber Publishers was a very clear and informative talk on the book covers and design of this famous family publishing company.

April Elizabeth Gowing Gave us a Fascinating talk on Kosovo and its growth as a country over the last 30 years. Few of us have visited Kosovo and it was very illuminating. I recommend Elizabeth's books on Kosovo – an account of getting children into the Education System, The Rubbish Picker's Wife and the Silver Thread, research into the fine silver jewellery found in Kosovo.

May Feasts and Fantasy Nicole Mezey introduced us to some well-known and much less well-known paintings depicting feasts and food from the 14th century to the present day with appropriate historical commentary.

June Garden Hunting in China Timothy Walker. Whilst this was a retrospective account of a trip to China in 1983 at the beginning of Timothy's



career in botany, it was an excellent and enthusiastic tour and explanation of the main features of garden design in China which remains true today

We look forward to the coming year with another great programme. Please take the opportunity to grow our membership with our new publicity material and by word of mouth. You are our ambassadors!

Lulu Pelly Chairman