

Study Days for 2026-2027 Season

Thursday, 19th November 2026

JMW Turner, A Modern Master

By Cindy Polemis

Synopsis:

In this three part lecture series Cindy looks at the career of one of the most widely admired and influential British artists of all time. JMW Turner's unique approach led the way towards a new form of landscape art, one that embraced the emotional power of colour, dazzling light effects and an almost abstract sensibility. As a result Turner came to be recognised as the most radical and innovative painter of his time, and one who had far reaching influence on other modern movements. We look at Turner's modern world- a romantic painter of his contemporary life, the importance of travel in his artistic development and Turner as a proto-modernist, who continues to have profound influence on artists today.

The lectures

Turner's Modern World: Looking at Turner as a romantic painter of landscape - romantic painter of Industry - a painter of contemporary life. Spanning his early architectural drawings from the 1790s to the steam power of the 1840s, this lecture will look at what it meant to be a modern artist during Turner's time. He lived through revolutions, the Napoleonic Wars the expansion of empires and the abolition of slavery in British colonies. At the same time, industrial development saw the construction of canals and railways and brought machines to the workplace. The industrial revolution brought immense wealth to new classes of entrepreneurs -Turner's patrons. He knew scientists, and worked with writers, poets and publishers. He was an artist OF his time and one who defined his time in a truly radical way.

Travels with Turner: Importance of travel in his artistic development, unlike Constable who never left Britain, Turner used every opportunity to travel as a means of gathering ideas and inspiration from foreign landscapes.

Turner: The Modern Master- Why is one of Britain's leading contemporary prizes called the Turner Prize? What is it about Britain's most famous landscape painter, an artist born in the age of sail, who lived through the age of steam,--what is it that links him so inextricably to the modern, to the contemporary? From the French Impressionists to abstract painters like Sean Scully, this lecture will examine how artists have, and continue to be, beguiled and shaped by JMW Turner.?

Lecturer Biography:

Cindy Polemis is an art historian, independent lecturer and art guide. She has a BA in Modern History from Oxford University and as a mature student she went back to university to study first for a BA and then for a Masters in History of Art at Birkbeck College, London University. Before that she spent many years as a radio producer and presenter for the BBC World Service working in news and current affairs. Since 2016 Cindy has worked as a lecturer and an official art guide at Tate Britain and Tate Modern. She has also been a trustee at the Museum of the Home, formerly the Geffrye Museum. Cindy has accumulated a wide range of art historical knowledge ranging from 18th century European

and British art to the contemporary international art scene. She has been an official guide for Frieze Masters art fair in London. She is particularly keen to draw parallels with art and social history and her lectures are accessible and engaging, drawing out the stories of art and artists which are steeped in human emotions and experiences which we all share.

Thursday, 11th March 2027

Ravilious, Piper and English Romantic Modernism

By Suzanne Fagence-Cooper

Lecturer Biography:

Dr Suzanne Fagence Cooper is an art historian working on 19th and 20th Century British art. She was a curator and Research Fellow at the V&A Museum, and is currently Honorary Visiting Fellow at the University of York. She has curated a major exhibition on John Ruskin and J.M.W. Turner, and more recently William Morris and his family. Suzanne is the author of 'To See Clearly: Why Ruskin Matters', 'Effie Gray' and 'Pre-Raphaelite Art in the V&A Museum'. She is a trustee of the Burne-Jones catalogue raisonné and has worked as a consultant for TV and film projects, including 'The Invisible Woman' with Ralph Fiennes. She leads art history tours in England, France and Switzerland, and is an invited speaker for Cunard. Her latest book is 'How We Might Live: At Home with Jane and William Morris'.