

18th March - 22nd April 2025

Spring into Action with

Edition No.26

EYE ON LONDON

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Plans to improve night-time economy

Westminster City Council has launched its first-ever Westminster After Dark strategy, aimed at enhancing safety, accessibility, and entertainment across central London between 6pm and 6am. The plan seeks to balance a thriving evening economy with the wellbeing of residents and visitors.

The draft strategy, now open for public consultation, outlines several key measures. Safety improvements include an additional 100 CCTV cameras, better street lighting, and an expanded joint council-police unit to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour. Women's safety will also be prioritised, with new licensed venues required to assess risks and implement protective measures.

To foster a more dynamic nightlife, the council is introducing Late-Night Entertainment Zones in areas such as Oxford Street, The Strand, and Victoria Street.

These zones aim to encourage live music, theatre, and other cultural venues away from residential areas. The strategy also supports LGBTQ+ venues and proposes more family-friendly, non-alcohol-led activities, including late-night retail and museum openings.

The council is also lobbying Transport for London (TfL) to restore night bus services and improve transport options after dark.

Cllr Geoff Barraclough, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development, urged the public to contribute to the consultation, emphasising the need for a balanced approach. Deputy Leader Cllr Aicha Less highlighted the importance of a safe, inclusive, and thriving night-time economy.

The public consultation runs until Sunday, 22nd June 2025. Residents and businesses are encouraged to share their views to help shape the final strategy.

Westminster City Council has approved a £2.6m investment in adult social care as part of its budget plans, ensuring hundreds of residents will no longer have to pay for care while increasing wages for care workers.

The funding, passed at Full Council, includes £1.4m to raise salaries for over 400 personal care assistants who support Westminster residents through direct payments. This increase will allow recipients to offer competitive wages, improving recruitment and retention of carers. Those receiving direct payments will see their funding rise, enabling them to offer an additional £1.50-£2 per hour for personal assistants.

A further £1.2m will standardise the income threshold at which residents start paying for care, benefiting over 460 people under 65. This change means some will see

reduced costs, while 315 residents will no longer have to pay anything for their care.

The investment is part of the Council's 'Fairer Westminster' delivery plan, which aims to improve services and opportunities for all residents. Alongside social care funding, the newly approved budget includes £140m for temporary accommodation, £1.2m to tackle rough sleeping, and £2m for city management measures, including additional CCTV cameras and City Inspectors.

Cllr Adam Hug, Leader of Westminster City Council, said the investment reflects the Council's commitment to supporting vulnerable residents, easing cost-of-living pressures, and ensuring carers receive fair pay. Despite the spending increases, Westminster will maintain one of the lowest Council Tax rates in the country.



£2.6m investment for adult social care approved



Westmead affordable housing scheme reaches milestone

Westminster City Council has marked a key milestone in the construction of the Westmead affordable housing project, as the development reaches its highest point, known as 'Topping Out'.

Council Leader Cllr Adam Hug laid the final piece of concrete at the site in Westbourne Ward, part of the North Paddington regeneration area. With construction entering its final stages, the first residents are expected to move in at the start of 2026.

Westmead will provide 65 affordable homes, including 34 family-sized council homes for social rent and 31 homes for key-workers. The project is part of the Council's 'Fairer Westminster' plan, launched in March 2025. The development will also include landscaped gardens, with mature

trees preserved throughout construction.

Under the Council's Local Lettings Plan, residents on Westminster's housing waiting list will be given priority for the new homes, helping to ease overcrowding in the area.

The new homes replace a former care home that required significant modernisation. Former residents were supported in their relocation to Beachcroft House, a purpose-built facility completed in 2020.

Cllr Matt Noble, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Renters, praised the milestone as a step towards delivering high-quality, affordable homes. Westminster City Council has pledged that at least 50% of homes in its 4,000-home development pipeline will be affordable, with further projects underway across the borough.

N News

Khan unites key partners to clean up London's rivers

London Mayor Sir Sadiq Khan has announced a landmark initiative to restore the capital's waterways, securing over £1.8 billion in investment over the next five years. Bringing together government agencies, businesses, charities, and community groups, this coalition aims to reverse years of pollution and neglect affecting the city's rivers.

The Mayor's roundtable meeting brought together Defra, the Environment Agency, Thames Water, and environmental campaigners to outline a decade-long plan for improving river health. Key funding includes £7.15 million from City Hall and TfL to tackle road runoff pollution, mitigate flood risks, and promote large-scale rewilding projects.

Thames Water has pledged £1.8 billion to enhance river health, targeting 26 sewage overflow sites along the Roding, Wandle, Lee, and Brent rivers. This builds on the

recent activation of the Tideway super sewer, which has already prevented over six million tonnes of sewage from entering the Thames.

The London Wildlife Trust is also committing £800,000 for nature recovery projects, aiming to expand biodiversity with initiatives such as water vole reintroduction and beaver restoration.

Despite the efforts, new polling highlights ongoing disparities in river access, with people from lower-income and ethnic minority backgrounds less likely to visit natural spaces. Mayor Khan is determined to change this, stating: "We've cleaned up London's air; now it's time to clean our rivers."

This ambitious plan aims to make London's rivers healthier and more accessible, ensuring they become a source of pride for all Londoners.



TfL funds free training sessions

TfL has invited Londoners to take part in free online training sessions that hope to "empower customers to act if they witness any form of harassment on the public transport network."

"As part of its commitment to eliminating hate crime and harassment on the network, and on the strength of the feedback from previous sessions," it says, "TfL is funding hundreds of active bystander training sessions with Protection Approaches, the national charity working to prevent all forms of identity-based violence."

The three hour training sessions, on evnetbrite.com, are delivered by expert staff from Protection Approaches. They

examine different scenarios of hate crime and harassment, encouraging participants to discuss what it means to be an "active bystander," and support other passengers on London's transport.

"A hate crime," says TfL, "is defined as 'any criminal offence which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on a person's race or perceived race; religion or perceived religion; sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation; disability or perceived disability and any crime motivated by hostility or prejudice against a person who is transgender or perceived to be transgender.'"



20mph limit not slowing buses, says mayor

London's 20mph speed limits on some roads are not to blame for slower buses, the mayor has said.

While there had been "a perception of declining bus speeds following returning traffic and roadworks after the Covid-19 period," Sir Sadiq Khan said, they are just as slow as they were five years ago.

In a written question, leader of City Hall Conservatives, Neil Garratt, said that there was "clear evidence" that bus speeds had been falling throughout the capital and asked what is being done to find out if lower speed limits was a possible cause.

The average bus speed, according to the mayor, in 2019-20 was 9.29mph. In 2023-24, it was 9.27, meaning a "very small decline of 0.02."

A report from watchdog London Travelwatch in November 2024 revealed that in some areas in central London, bus speeds had fallen below 7mph. Average speeds, it found, ranged from 8.1mph in inner London to 10.3mph in outer London. In every borough, speeds were lower than they were 10 years ago.

More than half of London's roads now have a 20mph speed limit, Garratt said in his letter to the mayor, adding that 19 of the 33 boroughs had 20mph speed limits across their roads.

But the mayor said that preliminary data revealed a 24.9% fall in fatal and serious injuries after the introduction of 20mph speed limits.

Jeremy Clarkson to give 1,000 free kegs to pubs

Jeremy Clarkson has said that he will give out 1,000 free kegs of beer to struggling pub owners. The former Top Gear presenter owns The Farmer's Dog pub in the Cotswolds, having acquired it in August 2024. But in October, he feared that he would not make his money back, having spent over £1 million on it.

Now, he is hoping to help others in need, announcing the gesture on Instagram. The kegs of beer will be his own, made using barley on his Diddly Squat farm featured in the Amazon Prime series, Clarkson's Farm.

"Welcome to The Farmer's Dog, it's a pub I've had for about six months now, and I've worked out it is a brilliant way of turning £100 into about £94 using nothing but costings," he said. "The only thing that is saving me from financial ruin is the fact that we serve Hawkstone lager.

"If you've got a pub and if you want to see if this strategy works for you as well, get in touch with us at our website, and if we like the sound of your pub, if it is the kind of place we want to be in, we'll send you a free keg. 88 pints of Hawkstone lager or cider for nothing."



Drivers urged to check number plates comply with DVLA



UK drivers are being urged to ensure their number plates comply with legal standards as the new "25" vehicle registration plates roll out in March 2025. Motorists who fail to meet DVLA regulations risk a £1,000 fine and an automatic MOT failure.

Experts at BigWantsYourCar.com are advising drivers to check their number plates are road-legal to avoid costly penalties. A spokesperson from the company warned that each year, when new plates are released, an increase in fines for incorrectly displayed number plates is seen. Many car owners unknowingly drive with illegal plates, which can result in hefty fines and an MOT failure.

The DVLA's rules for number plates include specific requirements: plates must be made from reflective material, with black characters on a white background for the front plate and black characters on a yellow background for the rear plate. Additionally, there should be no background patterns, the supplier's details must be marked, and plates fitted after September 2021 should include the British Standard number 'BS AU 145e.' Characters should not be removable or reflective, and plates must use a single shade of black.

Drivers can face fines if their plates are altered, difficult to read, or damaged, or if they use non-standard colours or fonts. Personalised plates must also adhere to these rules.

For those with electric vehicles, a green flash remains legal under DVLA regulations, as long as all other aspects of the plate are compliant. With the new plates launching, it's a crucial time for drivers to check their plates, especially if their vehicle is due for an MOT or they have a private plate.

Beetles star John Lennon has been celebrated on a new coin, coinciding with the year he would turn 85. The Royal Mint issued the coin, honouring the musician's life and career. The design is based on one of his most famous portrait photographs taken on the roof of his New York penthouse six years before he was killed.

The Imagine inscription on the side of the coin pays homage to his single which would go on to become a hit after his death. Designer Henry Gray wanted the portrait, based on the photo by Bob Gruen, to be the main design along with the Beetle's name.

He would follow in the footsteps of Queen, David Bowie, Shirley Bassey, and bandmate Sir Paul McCartney, in receiving this honour.

The coin was a "fitting tribute," says Rebecca Morgan, director of commemorative coin at The Royal Mint, for what would be Lennon's 85th birthday on 9th October. "Still admired by millions of people and generations worldwide, we hope this coin and its design will be treasured for many years to come."

Imagine coin celebrates John Lennon



London Home Football Traffic Watch			
Compiled & edited by Fahad Redha			
Women's			
March 9, Arsenal v Liverpool, 14:30		March 23, Fulham v Ebbsfleet, 14:30	
March 15, Chelsea v Man City, 12:15		March 26, Arsenal v Real Madrid, 20:00	
March 16, Tottenham v Brighton, 15:00		March 27, Chelsea v Man City, 20:00	
March 22, Arsenal v Liverpool, 17:30		March 30, Chelsea v West Ham, 14:00	
Men's			
March 10, Arsenal v PSV, 20:00		April 6, Fulham v Newhaven, 14:30	
March 13, Chelsea v Copenhagen, 20:00		March 16, Fulham v Tottenham, 13:30	
March 13, Tottenham v AZ Alkmaar, 20:00		April 1, Arsenal v Fulham, 19:45	
March 16, Arsenal v Chelsea, 13:30		April 2, Chelsea v Tottenham, 19:45	
		April 5, Fulham v Liverpool, 15:00	
		April 5, Tottenham v Southampton, 15:00	

Musk, DOGE and the Battle Over America's Public Services

In January 2025, President Donald Trump launched a new initiative known as the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), appointing billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk to lead its mission to streamline federal operations and cut government spending. While the goal is to improve efficiency, the department's actions have ignited a national debate, raising serious questions about the future of public services and the growing influence of private enterprise in government affairs.

DOGE was created to root out inefficiencies in the federal system. Its main aims are to reduce wasteful spending and improve the day-to-day functioning of government agencies. Under Musk's leadership, the department has introduced sweeping budget cuts across several departments, with projected savings of around \$500 billion. It has also introduced major operational changes, including a push to bring federal employees back into offices, cancelling contracts it deems unnecessary, and launching reviews of agency practices to identify further savings.

Musk, best known for leading companies like Tesla and SpaceX, was brought in as a "special government employee." This title allows him to oversee federal changes without needing Senate confirmation. However, the decision has sparked concerns about conflicts of interest. Musk's extensive business dealings with the government have led critics to question whether decisions made at DOGE could benefit his own ventures, particularly as SpaceX relies heavily on government contracts.

Several of DOGE's actions have stirred controversy. One of the most debated has been its reform of the Social Security Administration (SSA). Although framed as a crackdown on fraud, critics argue that cutting staff and changing services risks delaying or disrupting payments for millions of Americans who rely on Social Security for their income. There are also growing fears about the potential privatisation of public services, particularly the United States Postal Service (USPS). DOGE's proposals to privatise USPS have triggered

widespread protests, with unions and community leaders warning of reduced access and poorer service, especially in rural areas.

A major legal roadblock came when DOGE tried to dismantle the US Agency for International Development (USAID). A federal judge blocked the move, ruling it likely breached constitutional rules regarding government appointments. Although this was a setback, DOGE has continued to pursue its cost-cutting agenda and remains under close legal and political scrutiny.

One of the most sensitive issues has been the dismissal of large numbers of federal employees. Critics warn that letting go of experienced staff could pose a risk to national security. Some fear that individuals with deep knowledge of sensitive government operations could be hired by foreign governments. There have also been questions about transparency. Reports that DOGE officials are using encrypted messaging apps have led to concerns that public records may not be properly preserved, potentially violating federal laws.

The political response to DOGE's work is sharply divided. Supporters, including some conservative lawmakers and budget reform advocates, see it as a necessary step to cut government waste. They believe Musk's outsider perspective can bring much-needed reform to a bloated system. On the other hand, critics, including Democratic legislators and public sector unions, argue that the changes unfairly harm vulnerable people and weaken vital services. They also point to the risks of allowing someone with major private interests to influence national policy.

As DOGE continues its reforms, the debate shows no signs of dying down. The department's work raises pressing questions about how to balance cost-cutting with fairness, and whether essential public services should ever be placed in private hands. With national security concerns, legal battles, and public opposition mounting, the story of DOGE may shape the future of how government and private enterprise interact, not just in the United States, but globally.



ENVIRONMENT & SCIENCE by Natalie Shanahan

At the very core of being human lies the capacity for love. This powerful emotion takes various forms, from the adoration of your favourite chocolate bar to the "to die for" love that parents experience for their children. Somewhere in the middle are the profound emotions of lust and infatuation that can evolve into long-term romantic love. When unrequited, it can be devastating. When lost, grief can, quite literally, be fatal.

So, in celebration of that heart-warming word, let us draw our attention to the multitude of health benefits brought about by humanity's greatest emotion - love.

Intertwined emotions, subconscious connections, and a sense of belonging are only the tip of the iceberg. These induce a potent biochemical cocktail within our bodies that influences physical and mental well-being, ultimately shaping our fitness journeys.

Neurotransmitters such as dopamine, oxytocin and serotonin play key roles in love.

Dopamine, associated with the brain's reward system, surges during romantic encounters. It creates feelings of pleasure and reinforcement. This "dopamine high" is comparable to the euphoria felt during exercise. Even couples who have been married for decades showed neural activity in dopamine-rich regions associated with reward and motivation, similar to those in early-stage romantic love.

Oxytocin, often referred to as the "love hormone," is released during physical touch, such as hugging and kissing. It promotes feelings of trust, bonding and intimacy. Neuroscientist Stephanie Cacioppo, PhD, author of *Wired for Love: A Neuroscientist's Journey Through Romance, Loss, and the Essence of Human Connection*, conducted fMRI studies on the brain. She found that 12 areas of the brain work together to release the "feel-good" hormone dopamine, the "love hormone" oxytocin, and adrenaline, which induces a euphoric sense of purpose. Findings indicated that the amygdala, the hippocampus and the prefrontal cortex, areas involved in the brain's reward circuit, lit up on brain scans when talking about a loved one. Research indicates that higher levels of oxytocin are linked to reduced stress and anxiety, fostering a more positive mental environment for achieving fitness goals.

Serotonin is responsible for regulating mood, appetite and intrusive anxious thoughts. It influences feelings of happiness and emotional stability. However, love's impact on serotonin largely depends on gender. For men, serotonin levels decrease in response to romantic relationships, while for women, they experience a significant increase. This surprising connection was examined in a 2012 study published in the *Journal of Psychophysiology*. Low levels of serotonin are common among those with anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorders.

"This explains why people in the early stages of love can become obsessed with small details, spending hours debating over a text to or from their beloved," Dr Cacioppo remarks.

As love grows and the initial thrill subsides, more areas of the brain become active. Cacioppo explains, "People in love have this symbiotic, synergistic connection



The Science of Love

How Romance Shapes Your Mind, Body, and Health

thanks to the mirror neuron system, and that's why we often say some couples are better together than the sum of their parts."

Long-term love boosts activation in more cognitive areas of the brain, such as the angular gyrus, the part of the brain associated with complex language functions, and the mirror neuron system, which helps you anticipate the actions of a loved one.

Love isn't just about emotions, it has tangible physical health benefits. Numerous studies have shown that people in committed relationships often experience lower blood pressure, a reduced risk of heart disease, and longer lifespans.

Love decreases levels of the stress hormone cortisol, allowing the body to relax. Lower stress levels can lead to improved immune function and overall health, creating a more conducive environment for fitness and well-being. However, as anyone in a long-term relationship can attest to, this can work to your detriment. Loved ones can be far more annoying than any mere acquaintance, triggering epic bursts of cortisol. In fact, when reading a draft of this paragraph, my husband ended in fits of laughter at the thought of relationships reducing stress. I may stress him out, but laughter is the best medicine, so hopefully, I've negated any potential health issues I

may have induced.

Partners often motivate and encourage each other to push beyond perceived limitations, maximising the benefits of fitness routines. Sharing healthy meals or training towards common goals, like running a marathon, can help both parties stick to a routine. This camaraderie can make exercise more enjoyable, strengthening the couple's bond, even if it's over a shared dislike of broccoli or running.

On the flip side, if one partner doesn't fancy sweating it out in spin class and would rather spend the evening with a KFC bucket and Netflix, it can reinforce unhealthy behaviours.

Physical affection is another crucial aspect of love that contributes to health. Cuddling, kissing and holding hands release oxytocin and endorphins, both of which are associated with feelings of happiness and well-being, while also fostering emotional bonds.

Oxytocin is a neuropeptide with analgesic and bonding properties. Studies have shown that affectionate behaviours can reduce pain perception. Always useful for those suffering from post-workout DOMS.

On a microscopic level, physical contact leads to shared microbes, increasing microbiome diversity. People with lower gut

microbiome diversity are more susceptible to conditions such as inflammatory bowel disease, coeliac disease, type 2 diabetes, eczema and psoriatic arthritis.

Research published in *Nature* suggests that married individuals harbour microbial communities of greater diversity and richness compared to those living alone, with the greatest diversity observed among couples reporting close relationships.

Just one passionate kiss can transfer trillions of microbes between a couple. If one partner is physically fit and eats a healthy, plant-rich diet, a multitude of beneficial microbes can be bestowed upon their loved one. It's not just our guts that harbour a microbiome, every single part of our body is a host to microbial life. This means that all forms of intimacy might have an impact on microbial diversity and health.

Again, this works both ways. Someone with a less-than-ideal microbiome will transfer unhelpful microbes to their partner.

So much is still unknown about the microbiome, despite extensive research currently being conducted. So, if your partner doesn't eat their 30 plants a week, don't throw in the towel just yet. You can still gain all the benefits that come with a supportive and loving relationship.

DIGITAL ASSETS

SHARP LOSSES IN BITCOIN MARKET AMID TRUMP POLICIES

The Bitcoin market has seen sharp losses, with investors responding to increasing economic uncertainty, largely driven by US tariffs and Trump's Bitcoin reserve order.

The cryptocurrency fell 4% in March, reaching a low of \$80,123. Ether, meanwhile, fell by 5%. Other major cryptocurrencies followed suit; XRP and Solana lost over 5%, while Dogecoin fell by over 8%.

This sudden sell-off came despite an executive order by the American president that formally established the Strategic Bitcoin Reserve. The move had initially been seen as a positive one for digital assets, but further analysis has found otherwise. It has contributed to an ongoing market slump.

The creation of a Strategic Bitcoin Reserve may at first seem like a game-changer for institutional adoption of the cryptocurrency. The reserve, David Sacks, the White House Crypto Czar, said on X, would be built exclusively on Bitcoin seized in criminal and civil forfeiture cases.

"The government will not acquire additional assets for the stockpile beyond those obtained through forfeiture proceedings," Sacks wrote on the Musk-owned social media platform. This means that Washington would not be actively purchasing Bitcoin, ending any hopes of direct government-led demand.

The order also bans the sale of Bitcoin from the reserve, reinforcing its scarcity narrative. Current estimates suggest that the American government controls around 200,000 BTC, but how much of it has been sold off in prior liquidation rounds remains unclear.

While the executive order prevents future sales, past government actions have raised concerns among analysts and industry experts, including Bitcoin Magazine CEO David Bailey.

The Department of Justice (DOJ), he suggests, had been offloading Bitcoin against the president's wishes. This followed court approval in December 2024 to liquidate 69,370 BTC seized from the Silk Road marketplace. If the sales continued in spite of the new order, it could explain why the cryptocurrency has faced recent price struggles, he hinted.

The White House Crypto Summit on 7th March 2025 set high expectations for a government-led adoption of Bitcoin. But the lack of a clear strategy, beyond seized assets, has left investors disappointed.

Beyond the order, broader concerns are affecting the

market. Trump's decision to impose tariffs on Canada, Mexico, and China has created global trade tensions. Tariffs have historically led to inflation, disruption of supply chains, and dampened economic growth. They also often provoke retaliatory measures from the affected countries. This uncertainty has spilled over into 'risk assets' such as stocks and cryptocurrencies.

The suspension of some tariffs could offer temporary relief to investors, though they remain sceptical.

"I absolutely think the market has this wrong," Matt Hougan, chief investment officer at Bitwise Asset Management, told CNBC's Squawk Box Asia. "The market

is short-term disappointed" that the government had not announced it would start acquiring 100,000 or 200,000 BTC, he added.

Hougan highlighted comments on X by David Sacks, who said that the US would look for "budget-neutral strategies for acquiring additional Bitcoin, provided that those strategies have no incremental costs on American taxpayers."

"I think the right question to ask is: did this executive order make it more likely that, in the future, Bitcoin will be a geopolitically important currency or asset? Will other governments look to follow the US's lead and build their own strategic reserve? And to me, the answer to that is emphatically yes," he said. "The reason that question matters is that's the question that determines whether Bitcoin is \$80,000 a coin or \$1 million a coin."

The drop in crypto prices, according to Hougan, is a "short-term setback."

"I think the market will soon find its footing and realise that actually, this is incredibly bullish long term for this asset and for crypto as a whole," he said.



UK MPs TO ATTEND BLOCKCHAIN COURSE IN SWITZERLAND



Polkadot Blockchain Academy (PBA) will launch the first educational course designed for lawmakers that the industry has ever seen. It aims to give policymakers a deeper understanding of blockchain technology and Web3.

The three-day course, Polkadot Blockchain Academy (PBA), launches from 6th to 8th April in Switzerland. It will take place in Zug, an area nicknamed Crypto Valley for its blockchain-friendly policies.

A delegation of MPs from the UK will attend the inaugural course led by Lisa Cameron, founder of UKUS Crypto Alliance and an MP from 2015 to 2024.

The course comes during a time of growth for the sector in the UK, Cameron said.

"Given the prominent role that blockchain technology is poised to play in the UK's tech sector, it is essential that policymakers are equipped with the knowledge to make informed decisions," she said. "Polkadot Blockchain Academy's inaugural course offers a valuable opportunity for MPs to gain firsthand insights into the real-world applications of Web3."

On 10th January, the Treasury amended a financial law, clarifying that crypto staking is not a collective investment scheme, something that is heavily regulated. It appeared to mark the start of the commitment it made in November to draft cryptocurrency

regulatory framework that would be ready early in 2025.

At the time, Economic Secretary to the Treasury Tulip Siddiq said that the regulations would include stablecoins and staking services, along with cryptocurrency, saying: "doing everything in a single phase is simpler and it just makes more sense."

The previous government under the Conservatives had hoped to make the UK a crypto hub but a difficult regulatory environment presented challenges to that. Blame has been laid on the Financial Conduct Authority.

Educating regulators, says Chrissy Hill, the chief legal officer and interim chief operating officer at Parity Technologies, is essential for the future growth of the industry. Hill, who will also attend the course, said: "policymakers play a crucial role in shaping the future of blockchain, yet have empirically lacked access to structured education on its technical and regulatory foundations."

"Polkadot Blockchain Academy is committed to bridging this gap, ensuring that decision-makers have the resources they need to craft practical policies that foster innovation while maintaining safeguards."

This marks the first educational course in Polkadot's global initiative, something it plans continue with in other key jurisdictions.



London Property Market Showing Signs of Resurgence

Data from Rightmove has found that London saw a 1.3% increase in property prices year-on-year to January and a 1.8% uplift month-on-month. This meant that, regionally, the capital was second only to the North East in terms of a climbing property market.

Those already on the property ladder would no doubt welcome news of an uptick in London. The average price tag, according to Rightmove, was £673,483, over £200,000 more than the second most expensive region, the South East, where it was £469,779.

As stamp duty is set to increase in April, first-time buyers will need to save even

average, at £716,300. It dipped month-on-month by 4.9%, but this did not slow down its annual growth of 7.5%.

Greater connectivity and access to amenities are thought to be part of Merton's appeal, with the borough recently being named among just seven where 100% of its population is within easy walking distance of amenities, including a library or train station. According to TfL, the borough boasts five Tube stations, eight tram stops, and around 445 bus stops.

Rounding off the top three risers was the borough of Hillingdon, where the average property price is £570,532. This marks a 1.8% increase month-on-month and a 5.3% increase annually. One of the leafiest places in the country, Hillingdon received 70 Green Flag Awards in 2024 and was named the "greenest council area" in the UK in 2023.

Only one borough within Inner London made it into the top 10, Tower Hamlets, which includes Canary Wharf, Brick Lane,

renowned for tourism and home to some of London's most iconic sites, recently launched an empty homes hotline in an effort to crack down on properties being left vacant long-term and used primarily as holiday homes by wealthy owners.

Richmond upon Thames, the borough home to Sir Mick Jagger, Amanda Holden, and Tom Hardy, was second last on the Rightmove list. It had a monthly drop of 4.1% and an annual fall of 4.3%, denting its average property price of £896,828.



more money to get their foot on the ladder.

"Stamp duty charges rising for those buying above £300,000 will be a drag on the important bottom-of-the-ladder market in more expensive areas, unless some additional help for first-time buyers is announced soon," says Colleen Babcock, property expert at Rightmove.

Taking a closer look, Outer London dominates, with all but one of the 10 highest rises occurring on the capital's outskirts.

Merton leads the pack. Famous for Wimbledon Common, Morden Hall Park, and the All England Lawn Tennis Club, its average property price is above the London

The next highest in London is Barking & Dagenham, where house prices are far below the city's average, at just £378,764. It saw a 0.6% month-on-month increase and a 5.3% annual rise. This is likely due to significant planned developments. In October, it was one of just seven boroughs awarded a share of £12.4 million to build homes on abandoned brownfield sites.

This includes a 20,000-home 'New Town' to be built on the site of the former Barking Power Station. The development will feature two new schools, a hotel, a care home, shops, parks, offices, and student accommodation along the banks of the Thames.

and Poplar. It ranked tenth, with an average price of £594,253, a 1.3% decrease month-on-month but an annual increase of 2.6%. The borough is currently embroiled in a debate over a Chinese 'super embassy' on the site of the former Royal Mint building. Concerns have been raised over security, as well as potential future protests outside the site.

"If you want to secure a Zone 1 pad, now might be the time to invest," The Evening Standard says. Rightmove reported that Westminster, with an average price of £1,398,520, saw the largest fall of 4.8% both monthly and annually. The borough,

Kensington & Chelsea has also seen a decline, with its average price of £1,568,103 falling by 5% month-on-month and 3.8% annually.

This data could support Rightmove's predictions for the year ahead. "2025 could be the beginning of the price turning point for the London market, with the fundamental pull of the capital for both workers and international buyers predicted to start to reassert itself, helped by some major companies heading back to the office five days a week. Rightmove expects London price growth to be in line, if not marginally ahead, of national price rises."

BUSINESS & FINANCE

MANCHESTER UNITED ANNOUNCES 100,000- SEATER STADIUM

Manchester United has revealed plans for a new stadium that would seat 100,000 people, making it the biggest in the country. Minority owner Sir Jim Ratcliffe has voiced his wish for a new state-of-the-art ground for the club since buying almost 30% of it in February 2024.

The Red Devils had previously considered redevelopment of the historic Old Trafford but have now revealed that a new stadium will be built near the old one. The planned stadium will be the country's largest, overtaking Wembley with a capacity of 90,000.

The project has been undertaken in conjunction with the government's regeneration taskforce, chaired by Lord Sebastian Coe. It has been developed by Foster + Partners.

The new planned stadium will replace one of the most well-known and iconic football stadiums in the world and promises to help redevelop the surrounding neighbourhood.

During the announcement, Sir Jim said that it will become the "world's greatest" football stadium. It will be built, he added, "next to the existing site," but the fate of Old Trafford is still not known. Whether or not it will be knocked down has not been made clear.

The project, United said in a press release, could bring billions of pounds the country's economy and create as many as 92,000 jobs and over 17,000 new homes. It is estimated to cost £2 billion. The club's chief executive, Omar Berrada, said that he is confident that Manchester United could

attract investors for the project.

It would only take five years to build, according to Lord Norman Foster, founder of Foster + Partners, because it would utilise prefabrication. "The stadium is contained by a vast umbrella, harvesting energy and rainwater, and sheltering a new public plaza that is twice the size of Trafalgar Square," he said.

When asked about a timeline, Sir Jim said that it would depend on regeneration efforts from the government. Those involved with the new stadium stressed the value it would bring to the local area and North-West of England as a whole. "If we get this right, the regeneration impact could be bigger and better than London 2012," Andy Burnham, mayor of Greater Manchester, said.

Senior figures of Manchester United had been trying to sound optimistic about the club's future, though the men's team hasn't had the best season in 2024/25. Under Sir Jim, there have been redundancies and other cost-cutting measures.

The billionaire spoke in a round of interviews to justify many of his decisions so far and discuss United's future. However, some players have been labelled as "not good enough," saying that some were likely overpaid.

Majority owners the Glazers had also been widely blamed for the club's recent fortunes, both on and off the pitch. Fans have accused them of using the club for personal gain.



LOTUS ROBOTICS TO DEVELOP ROBOTAXI

Lotus Robotics, the company's self-driving technology unit, has announced a partnership with CaoCao Mobility, a ride hailing unit, hoping to accelerate the development of autonomous vehicles. The two brands have launched the "first fully comprehensive autonomous driving system," in China, featuring a "full-customised car, full-unmanned autonomous driving and fully automated operations."

Both firms have taken part in a pilot programme with self-driving cars, completing 13,545km of driving in test areas without human intervention. This, they say, proves "the real-world safety and reliability" of the technology.

The two firms will continue to operate in China, looking to refine the vehicle-road-cloud integration model that blends the vehicle's intelligence with infrastructure, and help it to address challenges on the road such as unexpected pedestrian crossings.

This comes as Lotus Robotics announces its partnership with Aramco Digital, the digital and technology subsidiary of Saudi Aramco. Both firms are hoping to implement Robotaxis in the Middle East.

Lotus Robotics offers a suite of advanced autonomous driving solutions designed to enhance vehicle intelligence and efficiency. At the core is ROBO Soul, a full self-driving software stack capable of integrating into any vehicle and operating in diverse environments. Providing up to Level 4 autonomy, it enables vehicles to handle tasks like parking and highway driving under specific conditions, with human intervention as an option. Elements of this technology are already featured in Lotus' next-generation electric vehicles, including the hyper-SUV

Eletre and the hyper-GT Emeya.

Supporting this system is ROBO Galaxy, a cloud-based platform that allows businesses to manage and analyse fleet data, enhancing efficiency and accessibility. It collects information from sensors, road conditions, and algorithms to ensure ROBO Soul continuously evolves and refines its autonomous capabilities. Additionally, ROBO Matrix offers real-time monitoring and remote safety features, using AI-driven insights to enhance guidance, control, and parallel driving solutions. By continuously learning from its surroundings, it improves both the accuracy and safety of self-driving operations.

Its latest advancements also include Navigate on Autopilot (NOA)—a system that enables urban road navigation without relying on maps. NOA facilitates smooth transitions between highways and city streets, smart lane changes, intersection U-turns, and efficient detouring.

The technology also boasts high navigation precision, allowing for variable lane driving, intelligent lane selection, and smart obstacle avoidance. Already deployed in China, a global rollout is planned for Q4 2025, with the level of autonomy in each market determined by local regulations.

Lotus Robotics works with a number of car brands to develop self-driving technology. The company has also tapped into Amazon Web Services (AWS) to store and analyse data from its products.

CaoCao Mobility already offers its services in over 57 cities in China, serving over 35,000 businesses and seven million professionals in the country.

Tesla and Rimac had already announced their robotaxis, hoping to launch in select cities in the coming years.

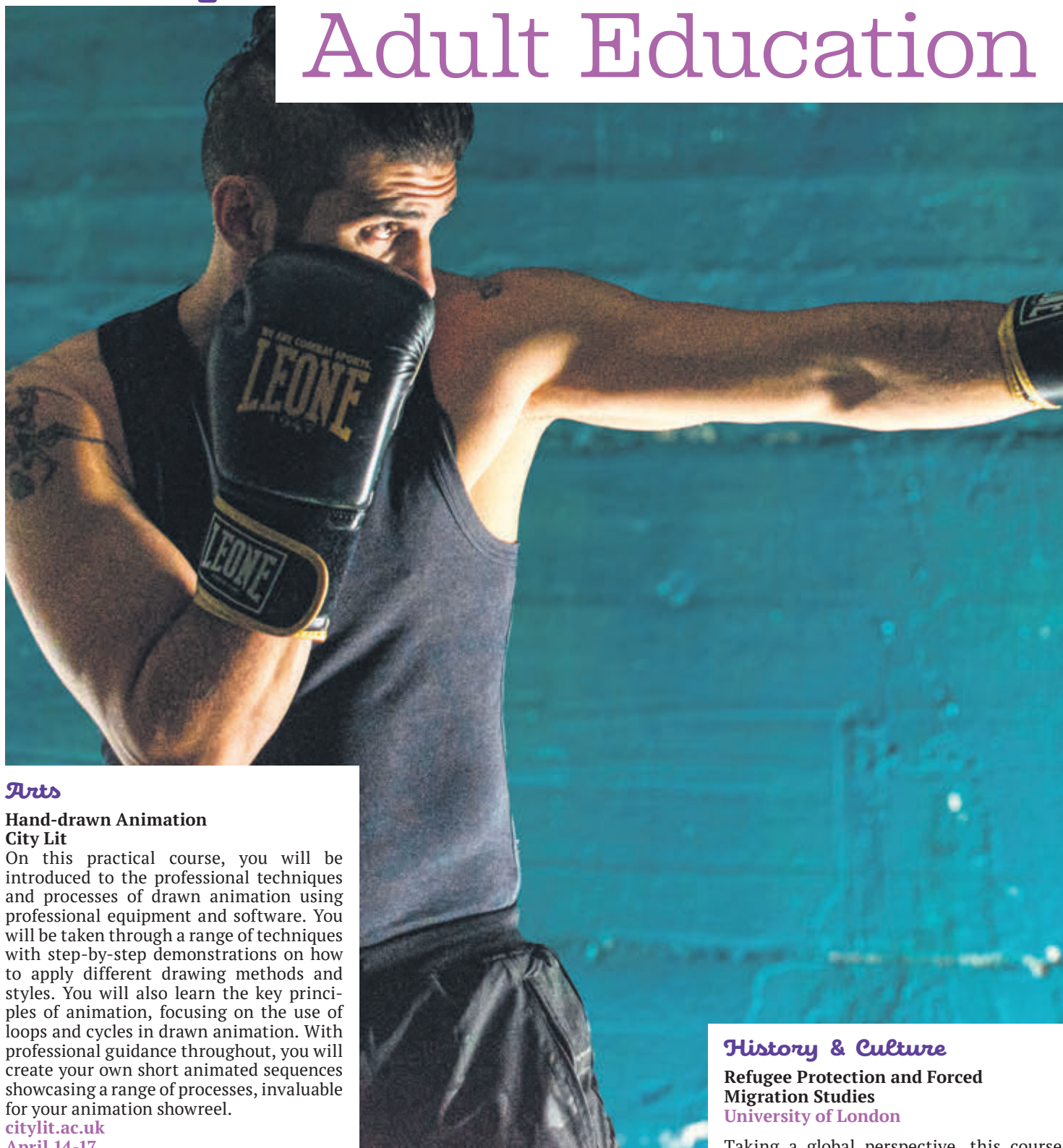


E Education

Enquiring Minds

Adult Education Courses

Compiled & edited by Fahad Redha



Arts

Hand-drawn Animation City Lit

On this practical course, you will be introduced to the professional techniques and processes of drawn animation using professional equipment and software. You will be taken through a range of techniques with step-by-step demonstrations on how to apply different drawing methods and styles. You will also learn the key principles of animation, focusing on the use of loops and cycles in drawn animation. With professional guidance throughout, you will create your own short animated sequences showcasing a range of processes, invaluable for your animation showreel.

citylit.ac.uk
April 14-17

Business & Law

Public Speaking London Speech Workshop

Conquer the stage and inspire your audience with this Public Speaking course, designed to help you eliminate bad habits so people focus on your message. You'll learn powerful tools to craft inspiring speeches that build rapport and captivate your listeners while mastering non-verbal techniques to look and feel confident. This tailored programme is customised to your unique needs and goals, ensuring you develop the skills to speak with impact and authority.

londonspeechworkshop.com
See website for more information

Culinary

Italian Cuisine: Liguria Le Cordon Bleu

Explore Italian cuisine in this three-hour class focused on Ligurian classics: Trofie Pasta with Basil Pesto and Amaretti di Sassello. You will learn how to make trofie pasta dough, shape and cook it, create an accompanying basil pesto, and blanch green beans. For the Amaretti di Sassello, you will learn how to make a meringue, shape, and bake the bitter almond cookies. In this class, you will make:

Trofie Pasta; Basil Pesto; Fine Green Beans and Ratte Potato; Amaretti di Sassello: Soft Bitter Almond Cookies

cordonbleu.edu
April 4

History & Culture

Refugee Protection and Forced Migration Studies University of London

Taking a global perspective, this course outlines the fundamentals of who 'refugees' are, where they come from, and where they go. It also explores the global system for refugee protection and potential solutions for those forcibly displaced. Learners will engage in a range of challenging activities, materials, and online peer discussions. Those who complete this course may continue studying with SAS on its online Master's programme in Refugee Protection and Forced Migration Studies. This MA was awarded the prestigious Roger Mills Prize in 2019 for its innovative approach to online learning. The programme builds upon the MOOC experience, offering a fully accredited Master's degree in an online learning environment.

sas.ac.uk
See website for more information

Language

Learn Dutch International House London

Dutch Level 1 is for students who have never studied the language before. Classes take place at the school in Covent Garden with a qualified, experienced teacher and fellow students. Evening language classes at IH London are dynamic and interactive, with an emphasis on spoken communication achieved through group work and role-plays. At the same time, systematic work on grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation ensures well-rounded language development. Your teacher speaks in the target language throughout, refining your comprehension and listening skills.

ihlondon.com
See website for more information

Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths

Motor Vehicle Maintenance and Repair New City College

This course is designed for students who love cars and are interested in a job within the motor vehicle maintenance and repair industry. It provides the opportunity to achieve the industry-standard Institute of the Motor Industry Diploma at Level 1. Successful students can progress to study and achieve the Level 2 Motor Vehicle Maintenance and Repair Diploma after a further year of study. This qualification is specifically designed to engage and motivate students interested in learning about vehicle maintenance and repair, as well as the various career opportunities available in the industry.

ncclondon.ac.uk
See website for more information

Sport & Fitness

Boxing London Fight Factory

Boxing is one of the oldest and most effective combat sports. You will use footwork, balance, strategy, head movement, defensive skills, and an array of punches to strike an opponent while minimising your chances of being hit. Classes are divided into three main sections:

Warm-up – Includes conditioning and stretching exercises essential for boxing.

Technique Training – Covers: Striking – Working in pairs with boxing gloves and pads. Guard – Drilling defensive techniques and guard postures. Movement – Focusing on upper body movement and footwork. Tactics – Applying diverse boxing strategies for different types of opponents.

Fitness Drills – Incorporating boxing-specific exercises to improve overall endurance and skill.

londonfightfactory.com
See website for more information

Events supplement

What, When, Where?

March - April 2025

DANCE & OPERA

Compiled & edited
by Fahad Redha

Il Trovatore

Royal Opera House

Troubadour Manrico and military commander Count di Luna have become rivals vying for Leonora's heart. Though Leonora loves Manrico, the jealous Count will do everything in his power to have her. Battles between the Count's army and Manrico's men follow, and he and Manrico agree to a duel. Meanwhile, haunted by a gruesome past, Azucena, Manrico's mother, harbours a secret that affects both Manrico and the Count: years before, in a vow to avenge the murder of her mother at the hands of the aristocratic Luna family, she abducted their younger son. Will she reveal this truth, or will she see her revenge through at any cost?

Royal Opera House,
Bow Street WC2E 9DD
roh.org.uk

See website for dates

Robyn Orlin:

We wear our wheels with pride

Southbank Centre

This piece is presented by the Southbank Centre and Dance Reflections by Van Cleef & Arpels. The title of the work – We wear our wheels with pride and slap your streets with colour... We said 'bonjour' to Satan in 1820 – is a homage to the rickshaw drivers of South Africa's past. In South Africa of the 1970s, at the height of apartheid, white masters were transported from place to place by Zulu men pulling brightly coloured rickshaws, a feat requiring a mixture of great strength and dexterity. Watching them, the young Robyn Orlin observed the ornate decoration of their vehicles and headdresses, as well as their sprightly, dance-like steps.

Belvedere Road SE1 8XX
southbankcentre.co.uk
21st & 22nd March

Rachid Ouramdane & Ballet du Grand Théâtre de Genève: Outsider

Sadler's Wells

Twenty dancers of the Ballet du Grand Théâtre de Genève share the stage with four extreme sport athletes. Rachid Ouramdane uses minimalistic movement perched perilously in the air. Dancers and athletes move effortlessly between a criss-crossing web of high wires and slack lines, delving into the connections between extreme sport and dance. Outsider is set to composer Julius Eastman's hypnotic music, played on four pianos.

Rosebery Avenue EC1R 4TN
sadlerswells.com
26th & 27th March

Alice in Wonderland

London Ballet Theatre

Venture into the whimsical and wondrous world of London Ballet Theatre's Alice in Wonderland, a ballet that redefines traditional storytelling. This production is a seamless blend of ballet sequences, engaging videos, and lively narration, captivating audiences with a fresh approach to the classic tale. Multiple ballet styles bring Alice's fantastical journey to life

through visually rich choreography. Each dance sequence is meticulously crafted to convey the essence and peculiarities of the characters and settings, enhancing the narrative flow with each graceful movement.

2nd Floor,

Debbie Flevotomou Architects W1J 6BD
londonballettheatre.com
Opens April

THISISPOPBABY: WAKE

Peacock Theatre

Best known as an ancient funeral rite, the Irish wake is a celebration of transformation, of moving from one realm to another. Ushering in fabulous change – caterpillar to butterfly – the wake is a timeless reminder to live fully. Experience WAKE, the electrifying Irish variety phenomenon that remixes traditions in a high-octane, heart-thumping celebration of life and connection. Immerse yourself in this wild WAKE, where customs collide with club anthems, creating a euphoric soundtrack for a night filled with aerial artistry, tap, cabaret, slam poetry, pole-dancing, and more.

Rosebery Avenue EC1R 4TN
sadlerswells.com
2nd–5th April

The Great Gatsby

London Coliseum

Get ready to roar because the Tony Award-winning new musical The Great Gatsby is coming to London, and it will be the party of the century. Fresh from its current smash-hit success on Broadway, this "shimmering, sparkling spectacle" (Variety) "explodes with life and energy" (Entertainment Weekly). The all-new musical, directed by Marc Bruni (Beautiful: The Carole King Musical), tells a story of extravagance and longing, featuring choreography by Dominique Kelley (So You Think You Can Dance), a book by Kait Kerrigan (The Mad Ones), and a jazz and pop-influenced original score by Jason Howland (Little Women) and Nathan Tysen (Paradise Square).

London Coliseum, St Martin's Lane WC2N 4ES
londoncoliseum.org
Opens 11th April

Romeo & Juliet

Royal Opera House

The Capulets and Montagues are sworn enemies. Yet it is love at first sight for Romeo Montague and Juliet Capulet when they meet at the Capulet ball, into which Romeo has snuck. The two fall in love and profess their devotion at Juliet's balcony. They secretly marry. The stakes rise when Romeo avenges the death of his friend Mercutio, who has been killed by Tybalt, Juliet's cousin. For this, Romeo is exiled from Verona. Meanwhile, Juliet's parents are forcing her to marry another suitor. In order to be together, Romeo and Juliet must risk it all.

Royal Opera House,
Bow Street WC2E 9DD
roh.org.uk
Until 26th May

The Flying Dutchman

by Richard Wagner

Opera Holland Park

Love, greed, hubris, and obsession drive a narrative shaped by the sea and its legends in Wagner's revolutionary opera of damnation and redemption. Premiered in 1843, Wagner's first great opera, and his most concise, looks back to the Gothic mysteries of his youth and forward to the penetrating psychological dramas he would later craft. The Flying Dutchman opens with a violent storm in which echoes of Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Weber can be heard, punctuated by folk-like ballads for the sailors and the women who wait for their return. Cursed to sail for eternity with his ghostly crew, the Dutchman can only be redeemed by the love of a faithful woman. Daland's daughter, Senta, betrothed to Erik, is shocked to recognise the Dutchman from an ancient painting acquired by her grandmother. Their love is instant, but will it be strong enough to lift the Dutchman's curse?

Opera Holland Park Theatre,
Ilchester Place W8 6LU
operahollandpark.com
Opens May

EXHIBITIONS

Visions of Nature:

A Mixed Reality Experience

Natural History Museum

Equipped with a mixed reality headset, you'll be transported a century into the

future to explore what could lie ahead for the planet. Journey around the globe and become visually and audibly surrounded by the awe and wonder of the future natural world. From harmonious highlands to resilient rainforests and even down into the Arctic Ocean, you'll experience eight different ecosystems. As you interact with virtual plants and creatures, you'll witness how human intervention and scientific ingenuity have helped these species and habitats to recover.

Cromwell Road SW7 5BD
nhm.ac.uk
Ongoing

Commission, Chris Ofili: Requiem

Tate Britain

Tate commissioned British artist Chris Ofili to create an artwork for the North Staircase at Tate Britain. Ofili considered the significance of painting directly onto the walls of a public building and wanted to choose a subject that affected us as a nation. Requiem is a dream-like mural, resulting from his poetic reflections. Ofili met fellow artist Khadija Saye in May 2017 when they were both exhibiting in Venice. One month later, Saye died in the Grenfell Tower fire. Memories of their meeting had a profound impact on Ofili. It helped him find a path to create this work, which holds at its centre an image of Saye as a 'powerful creative force of transformation.'

Millbank SW1P 4RG
tate.org.uk
Ongoing

FAIRS & FESTIVALS



Tutankhamun: The Immersive Exhibition

Excel

Tutankhamun: The Immersive Exhibition brings Ancient Egypt to life like never before, offering a cutting-edge 90-minute journey back in time. Featuring 8-metre high video projections, VR experiences, a

world-premiere hologram, and artefacts, plus much more, the exhibition promises an educational and immersive exploration of Pharaoh Tutankhamun's world.

Victoria Dock,
1 Western Gateway E16 1XL
excel.london
Opens 28th March

Events

What, When, Where

March

FILM & PHOTOGRAPHY



Earth From Space Royal Observatory

Each day, over 1,000 satellites constantly image and analyse Earth. The data collected, encompassing observations of everything from volcanic eruptions to traffic jams, is shaping our modern world. From space, Earth's fragile beauty is most obvious. Its changing climate is unmistakable, as habitats retreat and oceans warm. But the data gathered is also helping to turn things around. Earth from Space takes a closer look at our world

through the satellite's lens, opening up a perspective that only a handful of humans have experienced themselves. Through astrophotography, video, and interactive elements, the exhibition at the Royal Observatory Greenwich explores satellites' vital role in tackling climate change and reveals a truly unique, living planet: our home in space.

Blackheath Avenue SE10 8XJ
iwm.org.uk
Ongoing

Flowers – Flora in Contemporary Art & Culture Saatchi Gallery

Flowers have, throughout history, inspired artists, writers, and creatives. Flowers – Flora in Contemporary Art & Culture seeks to reveal the myriad ways that flowers continue to be depicted by artists and their omnipresence within our contemporary culture. Occupying two floors and over nine major gallery spaces, this exhibition features large-scale installations, original art, photography, fashion, archival objects, and graphic design exploring the ongoing influence of flowers on creativity and human expression. Aside from studies of their inherent beauty and drama, flowers are also utilised as symbols, signifiers, or metaphors for human emotions and impulses. Flora lies at the heart of myths and stories that inform our cultural outlook and language. Recognised as unparalleled objects of beauty in nature, artists continue to evoke the power and beauty of flora to convey a multitude of messages and meanings.

Duke of York's HQ,
King's Road SW3 4RY
saatchigallery.com
Until 5th May

The Face Magazine: Culture Shift National Portrait Gallery

From 1980 to 2004, The Face played a vital role in creating contemporary culture. Musicians featured on its covers achieved global success, and the models it championed – including a young Kate Moss – became the most recognisable faces of their time. The magazine also launched the careers of many leading photographers and fashion stylists, who were given the creative freedom to radically reimagine the visual language of fashion photography and define the spirit of their times. Relaunched in 2019, the magazine continues to provide a disruptive and creative space for image-makers, championing fresh talent in photography, fashion, music, and graphic design. This exhibition brings together the work of over 80 photographers, including Sheila Rock, Stéphane Sednaoui, Corinne Day, David Sims, Elaine Constantine, and Sølve Sundsbø, and features over 200 photographs – a unique opportunity to see many of these images away from the magazine page for the first time.

St. Martin's Place WC2H 0HE
npg.org.uk
Until 18th May

Goya to Impressionism. Masterpieces from the Oskar Reinhart Collection Courtauld Gallery

The exhibition will open with a group of major paintings by artists who preceded the Impressionists, including Goya's highly charged Still Life with Three Salmon Steaks (c.1808–12), Géricault's moving A Man Suffering from Delusions of Military Rank (c.1819–22), and Courbet's provocative The Hammock (1844). At the heart of the exhibition will be some of the greatest paintings of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, including Toulouse-Lautrec's striking representation of the female performer The Clown Cha-U-Kao (1895), Manet's groundbreaking depiction of modern life Au Café (1878), and a group of sensational works by Renoir and Cézanne. A further highlight is the pair of celebrated paintings by Van Gogh, A Ward in the Hospital at Arles and The Courtyard of the Hospital at Arles (1889), which illustrate the hospital where he had been a patient following his earlier mental breakdown and the mutilation of his ear, as seen in Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear in The Courtauld's collection.

Somerset House, Strand WC2R 0RN
courtauld.ac.uk
Opens 26th May

Picasso Printmaker British Museum

In addition to his many paintings, sculptures, and drawings, the Málaga-born artist made over 2,400 prints during his career. From his early years as an artist in Paris to his old age in the South of France, printmaking offered Picasso the opportunity to develop ideas, tell stories, and embark on new creative adventures. This exhibition offers insights into Picasso's life through his art, including his complex relationships with women and his partnerships with printers, publishers, and other artists. Spanning his entire career, it follows his engagement with different printmaking techniques and his changing approaches to making art.

Great Russell Street WC1B 3DG
britishmuseum.org
Until 30th March

Cartier Victoria & Albert Museum

A major exhibition featuring more than 350 objects, including precious jewels, historic gemstones, iconic watches, and clocks, that chart the evolution of Cartier's legacy of art, design, and craftsmanship since the turn of the 20th century.

Cromwell Road SW7 2RL
vam.ac.uk
Opens 12th April

Electric Dreams: Art and Technology Before the Internet Tate Modern

From the birth of op art to the dawn of the internet age, artists found new ways to engage the senses and play with our perception. Electric Dreams celebrates the early innovators of optical, kinetic, programmed,

EXHIBITIONS



and digital art, who pioneered a new era of immersive sensory installations and automatically-generated works. This major exhibition brings together groundbreaking works by a wide range of international artists who engaged with science, technology, and material innovation. Experience the psychedelic environments they created in the 1950s and 60s, built using mathematical principles, motorised components, and new industrial processes. See how radical artists embraced the birth of digital technology in the 1970s and 1980s, experimenting with machine-made art and early home computing systems.

Bankside SE1 9TG
tate.org.uk
Until 1st June

FAIRS & FESTIVALS

The London Festival of Railway Modelling

Alexandra Palace

Experience London's premier model railway show at Alexandra Palace! Perfect for families and enthusiasts, the show is regarded as one of the biggest and best railway modelling exhibitions in the UK. Explore over 35 meticulously curated layouts in various scales and gauges, presented by The Model Railway Club. These displays showcase talent from the UK, Europe, and the US, offering inspiration for hobbyists of all levels.

Alexandra Palace Way N22 7AY
alexandrapalace.com
15th–16th March

Where?

h - April 2025

Siena: The Rise of Painting, 1300–1350

National Gallery

Step into Siena. It's the beginning of the 14th century in central Italy. A golden moment for art, a catalyst of change. Artists Duccio, Simone Martini, and the brothers Pietro and Ambrogio Lorenzetti are forging a new way of painting. They paint with a drama that no one has seen before. Faces show emotion. Bodies move in space. Stories flow across panels in colourful scenes. This exhibition will bring to life a vibrant city of artists collaborating, learning, and looking. After centuries of separation, we reunite scenes that once formed part of Duccio's monumental Maestà altarpiece. Panels from Simone Martini's glittering Orsini polyptych come together for the first time in living memory.

Trafalgar Square WC2N 5DN
nationalgallery.org.uk
8th March – 22nd June

Photomontage Workshop

Royal Festival Hall

Get creative and try your hand at photomontage with artist and educator Ioana Simion, inspired by the Hayward Gallery exhibition Linder: Danger Came Smiling. Taking Linder's work as inspiration, this practical workshop explores how cutting, layering, and remixing images can be a powerful tool with expressive and political potential.

Southbank Centre,
Belvedere Road SE1 8XX
southbankcentre.co.uk
21st March

Ideal Home Show

Olympia

Dreaming of the ultimate home makeover? Say goodbye to the old, and hello to the extraordinary, as the UK's biggest home, garden, and lifestyle event, the Ideal Home Show, returns! Whether you're an experienced DIY-er, a gardening guru, or eager to delve into a world of décor, the future-forward solutions you need to create the home of your dreams await. Within the hotbed of home inspiration, explore 600+ renowned brands across interiors, home renovation, and gardens, right through to beauty, well-being, and style.

Hammersmith Road W14 8UX
olympia.london
26th March – 1st April

London Film Fair

Royal National Hotel

This event is the continuation of a legacy that started back in the early seventies, and over the years has seen different names and organisers, but its roots originate from the original Collector's Film Conventions

organised by Ed Mason. Now under new management, the future of the event is secured. The events are held at the Royal National Hotel, near Russell Square, with up to five events a year. The conventions present dealers from all over the UK, Europe, US, Canada, Australia, and South America who specialise in vintage and modern film memorabilia. Items cover the history of cinema from the silents to present-day blockbusters. The London Film Fair will appeal to avid film buffs, collectors, archivists, researchers, and students.

38-51 Bedford Way WC1H 0DG
londonfilmconvention.co.uk
6th April

Cluster Photography & Print Fair

Step into the future of the image at Cluster's highly anticipated photography fair, where we invite you to embark on a journey through the overarching theme of "Metamorphosis". In a world increasingly shaped by technological advancements and societal shifts, photography serves as a powerful tool for capturing the essence of change and evolution. Explore the multifaceted nature of transformation through the lens of contemporary photography. From the rapid pace of technological innovation to the ever-changing landscape of fashion and journalism, our photography fair promises to offer a thought-provoking exploration of the myriad ways in which images shape our understanding of the world.

118 Curtain Road EC2A 3AY
cluster-london.com
10th–13th April

Everything Electric London 2025

Excel

The world's leading Electric Vehicle and Clean Energy event, a must-attend occasion this year. Over three exciting days, you'll have the opportunity to explore a range of exhibits and activities, including test drives and rides of electric vehicles, e-motorbikes, and micro-mobility options, with many more on display. One of the event's highlights is the LIVE EV Arena, where your favourite Fully Charged presenter will review the latest electric vehicles live in front of an audience. The Home Energy Arena will provide expert advice on making your home greener and more energy-efficient, while dozens of live theatre sessions feature Fully Charged presenters, industry experts, and special guests discussing the latest trends in the energy transition. You'll also discover innovative products and solutions from numerous exhibitors, alongside a dedicated Mini Eco Explorers area filled with fun activities for children. Don't miss this opportunity to electrify your future.

Victoria Dock,
1 Western Gateway E16 1XL
excel.london
16th–18th April

London Wine Fair

Olympia

Discover the must-stock drinks of tomorrow at the London Wine Fair 2025, the premier event for drinks trade buyers. With over 400 premium exhibitors across dedicated zones, you'll find a wealth of new opportunities. Explore Esoterica, showcasing exclusive wines from the UK's leading specialist importers, or Wines Unearthed, where first-time UK importers present breakthrough brands. Drinks Britannia offers a selection of cutting-edge home-grown beverages, while the Mindful Drinking Experience highlights the growing no and low alcohol trend—essential for bars, restaurants, pubs, and stores. The fair also features a range of industry sessions, masterclasses, and targeted tastings, providing valuable insights and inspiration. London Wine Fair is the perfect platform for discovering, tasting, and sourcing the next generation of drinks market innovations.

Hammersmith Road W14 8UX
londonwinefair.com
19th–21st May

FAMILY & CHILDREN

Shrek's Adventure

It is a brilliantly bonkers, interactive, and immersive walkthrough experience, where the whole family can journey through Far Far Away as the stars of the show. See, hear, touch, and smell the adventure by exploring ten fairytale-themed live shows, from a magical 4D flying bus experience to interacting with various famous characters, including Princess Fiona and Donkey, to collecting the special ingredients that you will need in order to find Shrek and make it home safely.

See website for more information
shreksadventure.com
Ongoing

FAMILY & CHILDREN



Free Easter Egg Hunt

Merchant Square

Disaster has struck! While Max & Milo the Marvellous Mouse Twins were snoozing, a wild winter wind whisked away their nest, scattering the directions to their hidden Easter feast! Now, they need your help! Can you wake up sleepy Milo? Will you track down the lost nest? Can you uncover the missing eggs? Step into a magical, character-led adventure filled with dress-up, storytelling, songs, games, and a thrilling egg hunt! Get ready to twitch your whiskers, scurry through the

REPLAY:

A Limitless Recycled Playground

Southbank Centre

Part installation, part adventure playground, REPLAY is a space built entirely out of waste materials repurposed for fun by The Herd Theatre. The space features a design to ignite imaginations, a score composed from recycled sounds, and a crowd-sourced play generator. Children and their grown-ups are invited to play side by side in this space full of things you can move, change, combine, wear, and reimagine. In REPLAY's self-led experience, you can build your own worlds, invent your own games, be inspired by others, and leave ideas for players to come.

Southbank Centre,
Belvedere Road SE1 8XX
southbankcentre.co.uk
Until 1st June

Sisters 360

Polka Theatre

Fatima and Salima are the closest, coolest, hijabi step-sisters in all of Bradford, and they will win the Tiny is Mighty skateboarding competition, there is no doubt about it. They've practised every trick in the book and look (almost) as good as Sky Brown on the telly—just check out their YouTube channel if you're not convinced. Nothing will stop them. Except their parents have started whispering in the kitchen about living apart... about moving to different cities... only seeing each other in school holidays. How will they perfect their routine and win gold if their whole lives are about to turn 360 too? Only the greatest super plan ever concocted will help them achieve their dreams. Inspired by real-life skateboarding sisters Layna, Maysa, and Amaya, and their hero, Olympic medallist Sky Brown.

240 The Broadway SW19 1SB
polkatheatre.com
22nd March – 27th April

woodland, and celebrate with a choctastic Easter surprise!

Families can also embark on an Easter Bunny Hunt throughout Merchant Square, searching for Easter yard signs at various landmarks. Participants need to collect the map at the check-in desk, find all hidden signs, and take a picture. Once you find all of them, please return to the desk to be checked, and each participant will receive a chocolate prize.

Merchant Square, Paddington W2
merchantsquare.co.uk
11th April

Events

What, When, Where?

March - April 2025

Make and Race Your Own Toy Car

Alexandra Palace

Broomstick Racers are back! The Elite Transformation team returns to the Transmitter Hall to bring you more family fun, as they offer children the unique opportunity to make and race their own wooden car. After building their wooden car, children can then test its speed on the specially designed race track.

Alexandra Palace Way N22 7AY

alexandrapalace.com

9th April – 26th May

Dinosaur Adventure Live!

Fairfield Ashcroft Theatre

"The Greatest Prehistoric Show on Earth" 65 million years in the making... Are you ready for a brand new dinosaur adventure? When a satellite tasked with controlling the island's weather systems malfunctions, chaos erupts. The island's tropical climate spirals, leading to one big Jurassic Storm. If not stopped, it will erase all existence of the island... forever!

The mission: find the code hidden deep within the island, reboot the satellite, and save the dinosaurs before it's too late. The adventure of a lifetime awaits... bring the family on a T-REX-IFFIC journey with our brand new dinosaurs, meet their ROAR-SOME babies, and help the rangers save the island. Are you brave enough to face the Jurassic Storm?

Fairfield Halls, Park Lane,
Croydon, CR9 1DG

dinosauradventurelive.com

19th April

FILM & PHOTOGRAPHY

Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation Prize 2025

The Photographers' Gallery

The annual exhibition of work by the four shortlisted artists opens on Friday 7th March. This long-standing annual prize, originally established in 1996, is one of the most important international awards for contemporary photographers. The prize spotlights outstanding, innovative, and thought-provoking work by artists whose exhibitions or books have made a significant contribution to photography over the past year. The 2025 shortlisted projects feature documentary photography, constructed images, self-portraiture, performance, and family archives. Themes of migration, community and belonging, intergenerational traditions and rituals, family memories, and histories are brought together in this powerful shortlist.

16-18 Ramillies Street W1F 7LW

thephotographersgallery.org.uk

7th March – 15th June

Nature in Focus

Natural History Museum

The museum is celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of the world-renowned Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition. Over the past six decades, the stunning

FAIRS & FESTIVALS



Frock Me!

Chelsea Old Town Hall

Frock Me! is the UK's original vintage fair, established in 1997 by Matthew Adams. It is a celebrated event in the world of

vintage fashion. Matthew, who has over 44 years of experience running antiques and markets in London, created the fair as a response to the growing demand for authentic period and antique clothing. It was the first of its kind in London, introducing the term 'vintage' in relation to fashion. Today, the fair features over 60 exhibitors at Chelsea, with over 100 at Kensington and around 80 at Victoria. Curated from the finest specialists in the UK, many exhibitors have backgrounds in costume design for film and TV or fashion design. Whether you're hunting for 1920s fashion, 1970s pieces like Ossie Clark or Biba, or French textiles, Frock Me! remains the UK's foremost vintage event.

King's Road SW3 5EE

frockmevintagefashion.com

6th April

photographs it has championed have not only told stories about the beauty and vulnerability of the natural world but also advanced our scientific understanding of it. This free display will take a look at the role photography has played in advancing the science of natural history. Tracing the history of photography in natural history, it will explore not only the close ties between science, photography, and art but also how modern imaging techniques are used in science and storytelling.

Cromwell Road,
South Kensington SW7 5BD

nhm.ac.uk

Ongoing

Private Tours: The Holocaust Gallery

Imperial War Museum

This exhibition provides a comprehensive account of the events that came to be known as the Holocaust. Our guided tour looks at the origins and implementation of the 'Final Solution', showing how persecution turned to mass extermination and highlighting some of the incredible stories of the people caught up in these terrible events. Explore the stories behind some of the key artefacts within IWM's extensive Holocaust Galleries. IWM London's expert guides have an unprecedented knowledge of the museum and will bring these historic objects to life for you. This private tour can take place inside or outside museum hours. Tours outside museum hours give you exclusive access to the galleries. Tours last one and a half hours.

King Charles Street SW1A 2AQ

iwm.org.uk

Ongoing

Turandot

Royal Opera House

Featuring the ever-popular Nessun dorma, this opera of love and revenge is brought to life in a dazzling production. Drawing on Chinese and Italian theatrical tradition to evoke a richly imagined, mythical Peking, Andrei Șerban's dazzling production is a "blazing masterpiece" (Financial Times). Rafael Payare and Francesco Ivan Ciampa

conduct Puccini's opera of love and revenge, with Sondra Radvanovsky and Ewa Piłonka sharing the title role, and SeokJong Baek and Gwyn Hughes Jones sharing the role of Calaf.

Bow Street WC2E 9DD

roh.org.uk

19th March – 19th April

The 80s: Photographing Britain

Tate Britain

Explore one of the UK's most critical decades, the 1980s. This exhibition traces the work of a diverse community of photographers, collectives, and publications—creating radical responses to the turbulent Thatcher years. Set against the backdrop of race uprisings, the miner strikes, Section 28, the AIDS pandemic, and gentrification, are inspired by stories of protest and change. At the time, photography was used as a tool for social change, political activism, and artistic and photographic experiments. See powerful images that give voice and visibility to underrepresented groups in society. This includes work depicting the Black arts movement, queer experience, South Asian diaspora, and the representation of women in photography.

Millbank SW1P 4RG

tate.org.uk

Until 5th May

Nature Study: Ecology and the Contemporary Photobook

Victoria & Albert Museum

Landscape, flora, and fauna have inspired photographers since the camera's earliest days. Contemporary artists continue to experiment with the format of the book to adapt to the pressing challenges of our environment today. Their work reflects an ongoing transformation in how humans understand and impact the natural world. These books are diverse in subject, geography, and form but share a common thread of collaborative practice, curiosity, and reverence for our natural world.

Cromwell Road SW7 2RL

vam.ac.uk

18th May

MUSIC



Guru Nanak and Indian Classical Music

Barbican Centre

Eeshar Singh takes you on a musical journey that is both meditative and profound, exploring Guru Nanak's connection between spiritual verses and music. For Guru Nanak, music was a means of connecting with the Almighty, not merely entertainment. He saw it as a powerful tool to open the heart to the divine, a concept central to Sikh practice, particularly through kirtan—the devo-

tional singing of hymns.

Kirtan, set to Indian classical ragas, is considered a meditative act, helping worshippers transcend ego and connect with the universe. This use of raga reflects the importance of music in his message, creating a rhythmic meditation aligned with naam simran (remembrance of God).

Level 4, Barbican Centre,

Silk Street EC2Y 8DS

barbican.org.uk

6th April

FAMILY & CHILDREN



Cutty Sark – the world's sole-surviving tea clipper
Cutty Sark was built in 1869 to bring the finest and freshest teas back to London. Now you too can savour Cutty Sark's rich history while enjoying a truly unique London afternoon tea experience. Leave behind the traditional hotels and bus tours: at Cutty Sark, you can dine beneath the ship itself! Indulge in a special afternoon tea sitting directly beneath Cutty Sark's iconic copper-clad hull. Choose from a selection of teas, sandwiches, and sweet treats as you marvel at the historic engineering of the fastest ship of its day. All table bookings include entry to the ship, so you can explore Cutty Sark at your leisure before or after your meal.
King William Walk SE10 9HT
rmg.co.uk
See website for dates

Photo London

Somerset House

Photo London brings the finest international photography to the British capital every year. The fair presents the best historic and vintage works while also spotlighting fresh perspectives in photography. Along with a selection of the world's leading photography dealers and galleries, Photo London's Discovery section is dedicated to the most exciting emerging galleries and artists. In addition, each edition sees a unique public programme including special exhibitions and installations, and several awards announced, headlined by the Photo London Master of Photography Award.

Strand WC2R 1LAphotolondon.org**15th–18th May**

No Smoking

Rocket Gallery

Rocket presents its thirteenth solo exhibition of photographs by the internationally renowned British photographer Martin Parr. Running for five months, this exhibition is dedicated to the increasingly controversial subject of smoking and spans the length of Parr's career, from 1970 to 2019.

4-6 Sheep Lane E8 4QSrocketgallery.com**Until 31st May**

MUSIC

Celtic Sessions

Jamboree

Weekly traditional Jamboree Celtic Session! Come and enjoy the warmth and beauty of this special music. Musicians with a background in Irish trad are welcome to bring their instrument and join in. There is also a Happy Hour between 5 and 7pm. The session is led by established musicians on the London trad session scene, playing mainly Irish tunes, with a few Scottish and other related traditional styles thrown in.

6 St Chads Place WC1X 9HHjamboreevenue.co.uk**See website for dates**

Classical Music

Barbican Centre

An extraordinary line-up of classical music, featuring both homegrown and international talent alongside our Resident Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra, and our associates. In the autumn/winter, there are performances from some of the finest musicians, including Yo-Yo Ma, Sheku Kanneh-Mason, Samantha Ege, and Stephen Hough. We're visited by orchestras including Sinfonia of London, Orchestre symphonique de Montréal with Rafael Payare, and the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra with Gustavo Dudamel.

Silk Street EC2Y 8DSbarbican.org.uk**See website for dates**

Tindersticks with Strings

Royal Albert Hall

Tindersticks are coming to the Hall for one night only in spring 2025. Known for their richly orchestrated, darkly beautiful music, Tindersticks have carved a niche for themselves since their inception in the early 1990s. Their distinct style, characterised by dense, literary lyrics and melancholic orchestrations, has earned them a dedicated cult following.

Five years after No Treasure but Hope and three years after 2021's Distractions, Tindersticks return with their new album *Soft Tissue*, released on 13th October 2024. Tindersticks will be joined by special guest Oisín Leech.

Kensington Gore, South Kensington SW7 2AProyalalberthall.com**17th March**

Jack Quartet

Wigmore Hall

Elliott Carter's final string quartet (1995), a complex tapestry woven from a dozen miniature movements, and Helmut Lachenmann's passionate, often wild

Grido Quartet (2001) sit in company with Eduardo Aguilar's *HYPER*, written for and first performed by the JACK Quartet in 2021.

36 Wigmore Street, Marylebone W1U 2BPwigmore-hall.org.uk**22nd March**

Édouard Lalo: Le roi d'Ys

Cadogan Hall

Lalo's opera presents us with a Breton Atlantis: the mythical city of Ys, a glorious outpost in the sea off the coast of Brittany, protected by a wall and a gate with only one key. Margared, the daughter of the King, becomes jealous over the marriage of her beloved knight, Mylio, to her sister, Rozenn. She hands the key to the gate to Karnac, an enemy of the city, with disastrous consequences and divine intervention.

Audiences of the day delighted in the dramatic plot and ecstatic music, and it was performed hundreds of times across France and internationally over the decade following its premiere in 1888.

5 Sloane Terrace SW1X 9DQcadoganhall.com**30th March**

Brick Lane Jazz Festival

Truman Brewery

Bringing together London's vibrant underground music community for three days at the iconic Truman Brewery site and beyond, Brick Lane Jazz Festival will return in 2025, showcasing some of the most exciting new and established acts on the scene today.

Championing the eclectic and genre-defying wealth of artists that represent London's bubbling underground music scene—from nu jazz to hip-hop, neo-soul, electronic, and more—the festival is a unique yearly opportunity to immerse yourself in the newest and most culturally rich sounds coming out of the capital today.

With all festival venues within a minute's

walk of each other, come and discover new music, be part of a diverse community, and enjoy the historic site that is Brick Lane's Truman Brewery.

91 Brick Lane E1 6QRbricklanejazzfestival.com**25th–27th April**

Lionel Richie

O2 Arena

Lionel Richie has announced that he will be bringing his UK and European headline tour *Say Hello To The Hits* to The O2 in June 2025.

Say Hello To The Hits is set to be a magical tribute to Richie's enduring legacy as one of music's greatest songwriters and entertainers, and a true cultural icon, with the tour featuring a new production never seen before in the UK & Europe.

Lionel Richie, a Grammy Award®, Oscar®, and Golden Globe®-winning icon, has sold over 125 million records worldwide. As one of the most celebrated figures in music history, his illustrious career spans multiple decades, producing unforgettable anthems like *Hello*, *All Night Long*, *Say You, Say Me*, *We Are The World*, *Easy*, and many more.

Peninsula Square SE10 0DXtheo2.co.uk**6th & 15th June**

TALKS, TOURS, & WALKS

Second World War Galleries:

A Guided Tour

Imperial War Museum

Join the expert guides for a tour of IWM London's Second World War Galleries. Through a diverse range of moving and unusual objects, learn about the story of the most catastrophic war in modern history. How did it begin? How was it fought? And what was the Second World War's cost to humanity? IWM guides draw on its unparalleled Second World War collections to give you an in-depth look at the human stories behind this devastating conflict.

Lambeth Road SE1 6HZiwm.org.uk**Ongoing**

Yeoman Warder Tours

Tower of London

Yeoman Warders, also known as 'Beefeaters', will share key stories from 1,000 years of history. Be entertained by tales of intrigue, imprisonment, execution, torture, and much more. Learn about the Tower's iconic history as a fortress, palace, and prison. Discover how William the Conqueror built the White Tower and hear tales of the prisoners who entered through Traitors' Gate. Yeoman Warders will share details of the famous prisoners executed on Tower Green. Many are now buried nearby in the 16th-century Chapel Royal of St. Peter ad Vincula.

London EC3N 4ABhrp.org.uk**Ongoing**

March - April 2025

What, When, Where?

Events

Building Tour

British Library

Discover more about its history, collection, and architecture on a tour of the public areas of the Library, where you'll visit our viewing gallery, book handling room, reading rooms, and more. You'll be guided by the knowledgeable, passionate Library staff who will share the Library's unique quirks.

British Library NW1 2DB

thebritishlibraryculturalevents.seetickets.com

Ongoing

The Beatles & Rock 'n' Roll London Walking Tours

These Beatles walking tours are rockin' most days. (Not Mondays. Rockers don't like Mondays. Hold on, that's another rock band altogether.) Tuesdays through to Sundays, you're out there in Beatles London—heading to their haunts and hangouts, to where they riffed and let rip. You'll discover much more besides the iconic Abbey Road crossing from the aptly named Abbey Road album cover. There are two different Beatles walks regularly, plus a selection of specials.

walks.com

See website for more information

Pub Walks

It's a normal London Walk, but it takes a bit longer because you work anywhere from one to four pubs into the mix. Pub walks are convivial. They're a completely natural social situation. They're a chance to sit down, a chance for some refreshment. What's not to like?

Pre-pandemic, there was a pub walk every night of the week and two on Saturday. The pandemic put paid to that. But they're slowly making a comeback. The gold standard pub walk is the Along the Thames Pub Walk. Some of the others listed below are not full-fledged pub walks but they have—or can have—a pub element (they end at a famous pub, for example). When that's the case, we make that clear.

walks.com

See website for more information

Before the Crowds: Collection Tours

National Gallery

Step inside the Gallery before the crowds and follow our experienced guide on an intimate journey to uncover the hidden history behind some of the key portraits in the Collection. Explore the life stories of a nation and be inspired by the different narratives of the people who have shaped Britain.

This early-access tour will focus on some of the most popular works in spaces that are typically busy during opening times. On Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays at 10:00. Tours last about 45 minutes.

St Martin's Place WC2H 0HE

npg.org.uk

See website for dates

Natasha Brown in Conversation with Jo Hamya

Foyles

Natasha Brown's debut novel, *Assembly*, was *Foyles Fiction Book of the Year*, and has been translated into 17 languages. She was a 2023 *Granta Best of Young British Novelist* and a 2021 *Observer Best Debut Novelist*. Jo Hamya is the author of *Three Rooms* and *The Hypocrite*, which was shortlisted for the *Nero Book Awards 2024*.

She has written for *The New York Times*, *The Financial Times*, and *The Guardian*, among others, and served as co-host of the *Booker Prize Podcast*. She is also the recipient of a Harold Moody doctoral studentship

What, When, Where? March - April 2025

at King's College London, where her research focuses on building on 20th-century Western literary sociology and critique to create a viable school of literary criticism for a 21st-century digitised landscape.

107 Charing Cross Road WC2H 0EB

foyles.co.uk

25th March

The Conversation: Åsne Seierstad

St Martin-in-the-Fields

Norwegian war correspondent Åsne Seierstad has worked across the world, including Russia, China, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Her second book, *The Bookseller of Kabul*, sold over two million copies.

Her other critically acclaimed works include *One of Us: The Story of Anders Breivik and the Massacre in Norway*, *A Hundred and One Days: A Baghdad Journal*, *The Angel of Grozny*, *Two Sisters*, and now *The Afghans*, which introduces us to three people whose lives have been shaped by the fall and rise of the Taliban—Jamila, Bashir, and Ariana—as well as their families, friends, foes, and co-fighters.

Seierstad maps the lead-up to the Taliban return in 2021, how the first year of Taliban rule unfolded, and where this leaves Afghans today, and tomorrow.

Trafalgar Square WC2N 4JJ

stmartin-in-the-fields.org

1st April

How Surveillance Works

Gresham College

Our alert systems for identifying safety and security threats have evolved over time. As the threat from wild animals diminished, the perceived threat from other humans increased. To defend our territories and our livelihoods, we began to gather intelligence on our enemies, in the hope that being forewarned would give us an advantage.

This lecture explores our use of technologies that have allowed us to keep a closer watch, and the ingenious methods that have been used to counter them.

Gresham College, Barnard's Inn Hall,

Holborn EC1N 2HH

gresham.ac.uk

8th April

THEATRE

The Lion King

Lyceum Theatre

Disney's award-winning musical *The Lion King* explodes with glorious colours, stunning effects, and enchanting music. It follows the powerful story of Simba as he journeys from wide-eyed cub to his destined role as King of the Pridelands. Ingenious puppetry, stunning effects, and the enchanting music by Elton John, Tim Rice, and Lebo M will transport you to the heart of the African Pridelands.

See your favourite Disney story unfold live in the West End by booking your tickets directly from the official box office. Now in its 24th year at London's Lyceum Theatre, visionary director Julie Taymor's acclaimed reimagining of Disney's beloved film will redefine your expectations of theatre.

**21 Wellington Street,
Covent Garden WC2E 7RQ**

thelyceumtheatre.com

Ongoing

Macbeth

Lyric Hammersmith

A struggling and divided nation, tearing itself apart. So, when the Macbeths see their chance at the crown, why shouldn't they take it? But things don't go according to plan. Dreams quickly turn to nightmares, humanity erodes, nature stirs.

As society strives to make sense of the darkness that sits inside it, how long will it take for people to fight back against the endless cycle of violence and corruption? A visceral and contemporary new production that speaks to a world we find ourselves living in now, asking why *Macbeth* has haunted our fears and nightmares for centuries, and what lesson this cautionary tale is still urgently trying to communicate to us.

**Lyric Square,
King Street W6 0QL**

lyric.co.uk

Until 29th March

Dear England

National Theatre

The country that gave the world football has since delivered a painful pattern of loss. Why can't England's men win at their own game? The team has the worst track record for penalties in the world, and manager Gareth Southgate knows he needs to open his mind and face up to the years of hurt to take the team and country back to the promised land.

Writer James Graham (*Punch*, Nottingham Playhouse; *Sherwood*, BBC) updates his epic examination of nation and game to reflect Gareth Southgate's final chapter as England manager. Rupert Goold (*Patriots*, *Cold War*, *Almeida Theatre*) once again directs this "back-of-the-net winner" (*The i*).

14 Whitehall SW1A 2DY

nationaltheatre.org.uk

10th March – 24th May

Men's Business

Finborough Theatre

A love story set in the back room of a butcher's shop, with a brutal bastard of a dog howling in the yard next door.

Charlie's faith in the possibility of love

can't be dimmed, no matter what deranged brutalities life throws at her. Victor doesn't take his builder's boots off for dinner, has a rule to never go to a woman's flat in case she gets "ideas", and doesn't like secrets... or dogs... Is he the one she's been waiting for?

118 Finborough Road SW10 9ED

finboroughtheatre.co.uk

Until 12th April

HOLD ON TO YOUR BUTTS

Arts Theatre

65 million years ago, dinosaurs ruled the Earth... 30 years ago, a movie about dinosaurs ruled the box office...

This April, you are invited to HOLD ON TO YOUR BUTTS! This "funny, head-spinning Jurassic Park parody" (*The Times*) is a must-see "chaotic masterpiece" (*Stage to Page*) that has won over London fans and critics alike.

Hold On To Your Butts showcases Foley sound and physical theatre and is "imaginative, slick silliness on an epic scale".

6-7 Great Newport Street WC2H 7JB

artstheatrewestend.co.uk

7th–12th April

The Crucible

Shakespeare's Globe

Consumed by paranoia, superstition, and a ruthless sense of justice, a climate of fear and mass hysteria sweeps through the town of Salem, Massachusetts, when rumours grow that a group of girls are practising witchcraft. What lies are the townspeople prepared to tell themselves in order to survive?

Revolutionary, award-winning American playwright Arthur Miller's seminal political history play about Salem in 1692 and McCarthy's 1950s America is a timeless warning to us all. Ola Ince (*Othello*, 2024; *Romeo and Juliet*, 2021) directs this visceral, gripping, ultra-live adventure into a desperate, dangerous world where everyone is implicated, and nobody is safe.

21 New Globe Walk, Bankside SE1 9DT

shakespearesglobe.com

Opens 8th May

FILM & PHOTOGRAPHY

Women & Freud:

Patients, Pioneers, Artists

Freud Museum

From the early "hysterics", who Freud called 'his teachers', to later patients—many of whom, like *Princesse Marie Bonaparte*, became analysts—to his daughter *Anna Freud* and her partner *Dorothy Burlingham*, to artists such as *Marie-Louise von Motesiczky*, *Louise Bourgeois*, *Paula Rego*, *Alice Anderson*, and *Tracey Emin*, the exhibition draws on manuscripts, images, objects, visuals, and film footage to bring to life the many women who featured in Freud's history, as well as those affected by his considerable body of thinking, rethinking, and practice. The exhibition celebrates the establishment of the Press alongside *Bloomsbury Freud*. *Virginia and Leonard Woolf* met Freud in his last year in

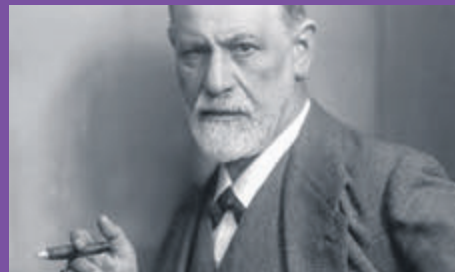
London. Several of Freud's British women analysands (and later analysts) worked on the translation that eventually became the *Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*—amongst them the remarkable *Joan Riviere* and *Alix Strachey*, who also laboured as a typesetter (and 'secrétaire') at the *Hogarth Press*.

20 Maresfield Gardens,

Hampstead NW3 5SX

freud.org.uk

Until 5th May





Travel by Lucky 'G' Lawler



Derrick Begay & Colter Todd

Is it something to do with the landscape, is it the light, is it the drive across the plains of the Navajo Nation? Perhaps it's the big sky in America or the road signs from times past.

I arrive at Durango Airport, a big white pick-up truck pulls up, I climb into the cab. The mobile rings, and I hear Kandace Scribner Blanchard say, "Do you think you can rope a few steer and take them to market?" I had arrived.

Kandace invited me to come out to Pagosa Springs to her Horse Ranch and then to drive shotgun to the PRCA (Pro Rodeo Cowboys Association) 2024 Turquoise Circuit Finals where her son Pace Blanchard and cousin Leighann Scribner were competing, how could I resist?

The Ranch was magical. Every detail – from wild-west studded leather couches to the biggest deer horn chandelier you can imagine. When Kandace ran the horses around the property, it was at that magic moment of sunset. I watched Kandace as she talked to them all the while, nudging them and moving them along.

That night, looking through the ranch's huge picture windows down on the barn, the pond, the horses, fresh snow lay lightly on the ground, lit by the bright glowing stars, like a breath pulsing high up in the sky.

I wake up, and we're off. A seven-hour drive to Camp Verde where the PRCA Turquoise Circuit Finals are held.

It's definitely the arrival and excitement as you drive up to the rodeo arena with all the spectators dressed in their finest belts, buckles & boots, getting ready to watch the top 100 rodeo athletes from Arizona and New Mexico competing for approximately \$175,000 in prize money.

LET THE SHOW BEGIN...

Rodeo Queens fly the Star-Spangled, the State & the Turquoise Circuit banners as

their steeds charge full gallop around the arena.

Champion Trick-Rider Bella Da Costa on a blinged-out quarter horse gets the crowd warmed up. While on her faithful galloping steed, she will treat us to 'Swing Under the Saddle,' 'Standing Hippodrome,' 'Shoulder Stand,' 'Suicide Drag,' a 'Look-No-Hands' saddle standing balance, and the finale: a Liberty stance as she rides full speed, high up in her stirrups, flying the Flag and a torch high above, shooting a sparkling fountain trail behind her...

Meanwhile, the Announcer James Horcasitas and Clown Matt Tarr roast each other to the delight and laughs of the crowd.

There is Team Roping, Steer Roping, Barrel Racing, Bareback Bucking Broncos & Bulls.

It's the beauty & grace of their steeds, the steadfastness & enjoyment & trust between man & horse. It's the teeth-baring grins, the lightning speed. It's the bolting & bucking out of the gates, the cheer of the crowds, up and down, round and round, back and forth – man & beast all hell-bent for leather.

"Keep that arm up as you fly and feet forward!! Yihaa!!"

THE RODEO DYNASTY Rodeo is in their blood

This family of rodeo royalty – three generations of rodeo champions, starting with Reuben (Butch) Scribner, the bull rider. Sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, cousins, and grandkids.

"That picture of my Dad on the bull was taken at the 1962 XIT Rodeo in Dalhart, Texas. He won the Bull Riding. That is where my mom & dad met at the dance after the rodeo." – Kandace

Kandace's daughter Sydni, two sons Pace & Levi, and cousin Leighann and her family, uncles & aunts are all champions in their own right.

Kandace ran her first professional Barrel

Race when she was 9 years old. Kandace held the fastest time for over 20 years at the National Little Britches Finals (NLBRA) in the breakaway. Among many accolades, she was all-around cowgirl in New Mexico for two different years, and she broke and held one arena record in California. Kandace continues to barrel race to this day.

This family is unique in that they train their own horses.

"The relationship goes a lot deeper that way. You are like one mind, one spirit."

In the 4th grade, she got a job riding horses. "I traded for sessions in reining & Western pleasure. He would train one and have me mirror him on the other young

horse so we got twice as much training done each day. Then in exchange, I would ride his horses all week.

"That's where I learned that if you do it, it's best. It's a communication that exists between horse and rider that you get if you train them. When someone else trains the horse you can get that, but it takes a long time."

Kandace talks to her horses a lot. "With voice training, you don't have to be pulling on them. A voice-trained horse creates the least amount of effort, and that's what you want."

See Y'all on the Trail!



Der Rubin 'Butch' Scribner Bull Rider - Scribner Blanchard family photos with permission

THE STAGE DOOR *by John Martin*

THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA: HIGH FASHION HITS THE WEST END STAGE

Dominion Theatre 268-269 Tottenham Ct Rd W1T 7AQ nederland.co.uk/dominion until 18th October



George Buckley as Andy and cast in *The Devil Wears Prada* Photo: Mark Senior

The Devil Wears Prada is the latest in a long line of films adapted for the stage. These adaptations tend to fall into two categories: those that radically reinvent the film for the stage, such as *The Producers* and *Billy Elliot*, and those that simply transfer the film to the stage with added songs. The prime culprit here is *Pretty Woman*.

Unfortunately, *The Devil Wears Prada* falls firmly into the latter camp. It is, quite literally, beat for beat, line for line, the film, with no added perspective or irony, just some songs by Elton John.

The show has had a bit of a bumpy road on its way to the Dominion Theatre in London. Originally produced last year in Chicago as an out-of-town 'try out' before Broadway, it was deemed not up to standard, leading to nearly everyone involved being let go. The show was then announced to have a UK production, starting in Plymouth and now running at the Dominion, with a new director, Jerry Mitchell, who has considerable experience

in adapting movie musicals for the stage, such as *Kinky Boots* and *Legally Blonde*.

It is easy to forget that Elton John has written some truly great theatre scores, and he has also had some misfires (but who hasn't?). He did a musical adaptation of *Lestat* that I tried to see when it was in New York for about five minutes. Coincidentally, in the same week that this show opened, Tammy Faye closed on Broadway. Despite its success in London at the Almeida, Tammy Faye crashed on Broadway after 24 previews and 29 performances, losing all of its \$25 million investment.

Aside from *Billy Elliot*, Elton John's great successes include *The Lion King* and *Aida*, the latter yet to be seen here. I was hoping that his score for *The Devil Wears Prada* would be on a par with these, particularly in view of his recent health issues, which may mean we won't get another theatre score from him. The music is loud, and some songs have a strong disco beat and are very recognisably "him." However, in

my opinion, it's an okay score, not a great one, with no standout songs.

Jerry Mitchell briskly directs the production, and the sets and costumes look fantastic on the enormous Dominion stage. However, his choreography is not particularly inventive, with much of the chorus pointing enthusiastically like airline cabin crew.

Kate Weatherhead's book appears to cut and paste large sections of dialogue from the film, adding nothing new to the story.

Miranda Priestly is played by Vanessa Williams, who received an enormous ovation upon her entrance as she rose through a trapdoor. It's a fantastic entrance, but I suspect the applause was as much for Miranda Priestly as it was for Vanessa Williams. Her singing is excellent, and she does her best to channel Meryl Streep in delivering her many cutting put-downs.

As with many such film adaptations, the cast has to retrofit their performances into pre-existing ones. Georgie Buckley, making her debut as Andy (played by Anne

Hathaway in the film), charts the transformation from duckling to swan with some powerhouse vocals.

Andi Di Bartolomeo steps into Emily Blunt's stilettos as Emily, using her English accent, which oddly shifts to American halfway through her songs. Nevertheless, she delivers them well.

Matt Henry plays Nigel (originally Stanley Tucci in the film) but fails to make much of an impression. He lacks the energy and precise comic timing needed to make his lines truly land, nor does he achieve the pathos of his cinematic counterpart.

The two competing boyfriends, Nate and Christian, are played by Rhys Whitfield and James Darch. Unfortunately, they struggle to make much of an impact in their supporting roles, not helped by the fact that they look very similar, a mistake the film avoided.

If you love the film, and clearly many people do, you're likely to have a good time. Just don't expect anything new.

THE STAGE DOOR

by John Martin

INSIDE NO. 9: STAGE FRIGHT

Wyndham's Theatre Charing Cross Road WC2H 0DA wyndhamstheatre.co.uk until Saturday 5th April

★ ★ ★ ★ ★



Steve Pemberton. Credit Marc Brenner



Reece Shearsmith. Credit Marc Brenner

Inside No. 9 is a very successful anthology TV series, so you can dip in and out, and each episode is a self-contained story linked to the number nine, which can be a house number, a rowboat, or even a symphony.

Written by Steve Pemberton and Reece Shearsmith, these are warped, twisted tales of the unexpected. Some are very, very funny; some are very sad. Some are poignant. All of them have a twist, and both writers have a penchant for the macabre.

We are warned as we enter that "what happens inside No. 9 stays inside No. 9," so I must be careful what I say as I don't want to spoil it. The series ended fittingly after

nine seasons, and this is a stage farewell. This is clearly aimed at fans of the series, with lots of Easter eggs and call-backs. However, I believe if you haven't seen the series, you will still have a great time.

It starts out with the funniest warning about eating and using a mobile phone in the theatre I have ever seen. It is clever, warped, and twisted and exactly what we expect from them.

It is very meta as we shift between them chatting to us as if on the stage at Wyndham's, discussing the theatre's hauntings, before segueing into an episode from Series 4 called Bernie Clifton's Dressing Room.

However, they haven't simply stitched

together previous episodes and thrown them on stage; Fawlty Towers, I'm looking at you! This is very much a theatrical piece rooted in theatre lore, superstitions, and history, which all feed into the twists and turns of what we see.

We get references to other episodes, and we get a guest star in another sketch. On opening night, it was Matthew Kelly; when I attended, it was Les Dennis. It was so obvious that they were all trying not to laugh with their ad libs.

There are gruesome deaths, shifting realities, and countless meta-theatrical nods, including references to Jamie Lloyd, video cameras, and even true stories about Hamlet at the National Theatre.

As well as being talented writers, they are both excellent actors, effortlessly shifting from comedy to pathos, bringing the best out of the material. They are supported by an excellent company of actors, including Anna Francolini, who has an uncanny resemblance to Patti LuPone!

As with the TV show, there are so many clues, twists, and rug pulling that you think it's over, and it's not. You think you know what's happening, and then it shifts again. It is very, very funny, and yes, a little bit scary.

It is wonderfully funny, scary, and ultimately moving and a perfect end to Inside No. 9. I want to see it again.



Anna Francolini. Credit Marc Brenner



Gaby French. Credit Marc Brenner

The Great Mughals:

The word “mogul” has evolved in modern usage to mean, as the dictionary defines it, “a person who controls, either through personal ownership or a dominant position, any media enterprise.” Today, it refers to the new race of billionaire techno-oligarchs—Bezos, Zuckerberg, Musk. The term “mogul” is a development of “Mughal,” but the Mughals were far more than just powerful figures of immense wealth. While their riches were beyond measure, much like their modern counterparts, their wealth was transformed into art, design and dazzlingly lavish luxury that remains unmatched in history.

The Great Mughals: Art, Architecture and Opulence at the Victoria and Albert Museum, running until 5th May, marks the museum’s return to the fascinating subject of India’s Mughal emperors after more than 40 years. Rather than attempting to encapsulate the entire nearly 400-year dynasty, this exhibition focuses on the artistic patronage of three of the earliest and most captivating Mughals: Akbar (c.1556-1605), Jahangir (c.1605-1627) and Shah Jahan (c.1628-1658). These rulers, descendants of the legendary Mongolian conqueror Timur—known to history as Tamburlaine and immortalised by Shakespeare—presided over an empire that was as much about cultural splendour as it

was about political dominance. Mughal is the Persian spelling of Mongol.

The dynasty was established when Babur, a Timurid prince, swept down from the north to seize Delhi in 1526. Their subsequent conquests across much of the Indian subcontinent only added to their vast wealth. Their dominion stretched from Kabul in the north to Andhra Pradesh in the south, Karachi in the west and Nagaland in the east.

The Mughal court was one of remarkable religious tolerance, where Persian served as the lingua franca. Artists—including painters, calligraphers and architects—were drawn from across the empire to collaborate in the imperial workshops. This continuous exchange of ideas fuelled an artistic revolution. “Hindustani artists, Iranian masters and even a few Europeans came together in the imperial workshops to create a new, hybrid art,” said the exhibition’s curator, Susan Stronge. The result was the emergence of a distinct Mughal artistic identity, which flourished under these three emperors.

This exhibition is the first to explore the international influences that shaped the arts and culture of the Mughal courts, a full century before Robert Clive’s voracious East India Company appropriated the empire’s wealth and power.

Akbar, though illiterate, did not need to read or write. He was surrounded by



A European, Court Workshops, c. 1610-1620
© Victoria and Albert Museum, London

scholars whose sole duty was to read to him, mostly from books of myth and legend. His remarkable memory meant that no reader dared skip a passage, as he would quickly notice. In 1589, towards the end of his reign, he commissioned an illustrated biography, the *Akbar-Nama*, whose vibrantly coloured and dynamic images depicted both male and female labourers constructing his great fort at Agra.

It was Akbar who founded the imperial workshops, staffed by the finest craftsmen and artists, who produced everything from textiles and carpets to paintings, goldware and silverware. They also created lavishly illustrated manuscripts for his *House of Books*, where Iranian masters oversaw mostly Hindustani artists. Among their works were the *Hamza-Nama*, epic tales of legendary battles and sorcery. One manuscript even describes an attack by *firangis*—the Mughal term for Europeans. Another, from the 1590s, is titled *Iskandar-Nama*, or *The Book of Alexander*.

These artworks, which appear as fresh and vivid as if they were created yesterday, offer rare glimpses into court life. One of the most intimate is a manuscript from the *Akbar-Nama*, depicting the birth of his son Murad, a rare insight into the women’s quarters.

Akbar’s successor, his son Salim, took the regnal name Jahangir, meaning “World Seizer.” He inherited incalculable wealth along with his father’s passion for the arts. He expanded the imperial workshops, bringing in European artists who introduced enamelling—a craft that would become a defining feature of Mughal artistry. His court also experimented with new materials, such as jade. England’s first ambassador to the Mughal court, Sir Thomas Roe, wrote to the future Charles I, describing it as “the treasury of the world.”

Both Akbar and Jahangir exercised control over their empire’s flourishing economy by issuing their own coinage, which were themselves miniature masterpieces of design. Jahangir’s formidable wife, Nur

Jahan, was the only Mughal consort to have coins struck in her name.

The Mughal emperors also introduced festivals as key elements of court life. It was Akbar who established the tradition of addressing his people from an upper-storey balcony, a practice that has since been adopted by royalty worldwide. These public events were occasions for the empire’s finest craftsmen to showcase their extraordinary creations, demonstrating their ingenuity and artistic virtuosity.

Jahangir, in 1619, commissioned a grand throne from Augustin, a French jeweller, who was granted the honorary title *Hunamond*, meaning *The Artist*.

Then, in 1628, came Shah Jahan, Jahangir’s heir, whose reign would see the construction of perhaps the most famous building in the world—the Taj Mahal, built in memory of his beloved wife, Mumtaz Mahal. His rule was marked by an extraordinary sense of artistic harmony. A new style emerged, one that replaced traditional patterns with unified, balanced designs. Floral motifs became the defining aesthetic, appearing everywhere from gold vessels and manuscript borders to weaponry and even inlaid into gemstones.

Shah Jahan’s grief over Mumtaz’s death was profound. His beard is said to have turned white during the mourning period, and the Taj Mahal became the ultimate expression of his devotion. The floral designs of this era reflected an ideal world, untouched by disease, decay or poverty. Among the finest artefacts in this exhibition is an almost pure white jade wine cup said to have belonged to Shah Jahan—though ironically, he likely never drank from it, as he had renounced alcohol.

Yet, under Shah Jahan’s successor, Aurangzeb, the empire’s creative energy waned. Despite this decline, the artistic legacy of the Taj Mahal endured. Its floral motifs became an indelible part of South Asian art and architecture, influencing subsequent Hindu, Sikh and Muslim courts alike.



Mughal miniature painting from the *Hamzanama*, depicting the Giant Zumurud Shah fleeing with his army on magical urns, c. 1562-1577

Art, Architecture and Opulence

Arts & Culture by John Martin

Philip Sutton RA:

Philip Sutton is one of a golden generation of British painters who, in the mid-1950s, refused to be eclipsed by the brilliance of American Expressionism. Sutton, Ewan Uglow, Craigie Aitchison and Michael Andrews were all students together at the Slade School of Fine Art in the early 1950s, and each made an indelible mark on modern art history.

Now 96, Sutton is the last surviving member of that distinguished group. Despite his failing eyesight, he continues to paint, though the exhibition at Twilight Contemporary in Essex Road, Islington, focuses on a short but intense period of his career. It was during this time that he produced paintings of stunningly vibrant colour, breathless action and clamorous noise, inspired by history and by Shakespeare.

In the 1980s, the American actor and director Sam Wanamaker was pursuing what had seemed an impossible dream: creating a replica of Shakespeare's 1599 theatre, The Globe. It would eventually open in 1997, four years after Wanamaker's death. As part of the project, Wanamaker wanted a poster to publicise it across London, and Sutton was commissioned to design it. This was a departure from his more recognisable subject matter, portraits, often self-portraits in extravagant hats, and landscapes.

As so often in Sutton's long career, a tiny intervention of fate set the course for what became his Shakespeare collection. This time, it was via Radio 3, his usual studio companion. "To paint Shakespeare was like being told to paint the world, impossible," he recalls. "Back in the studio alone after meeting Wanamaker, I hadn't an idea, and on the radio was this fantastic music. It turned out to be Walton's score from the film of *Henry V*, and the choice was made for me, I suddenly had an image of Agincourt."

The poster commission eventually led Sutton into a year-long creative frenzy, producing dozens of canvases, large and small, filled with charging horses, weapon-wielding warriors and a striking portrait of Elizabeth I adorned in the most lavish of feathered head-dresses. Almost all were painted in 1996 in his studio at his then-home in Manorbier, on the Pembrokeshire coast.

This marked a completely new artistic direction for him. He scoured reference books for guidance and found inspiration at the National Gallery in Uccello's *The Battle of San Romano*, with its depiction of close-quarters combat around a magnificent white charger. He also visited the site of the Battle of Agincourt and was struck by how farming and livestock-rearing must have continued even as the battle raged around them. In his paintings, knights are seen dodging chickens, rabbits, sheep and goats as they charge into combat.

Most of these works were painted on a black background, where blood-red mingles with tree-green and burning yellow as battle unfolds in a small meadow surrounded by woods. Mounted warriors, banners flying, trot and canter towards the confrontation. A mêlée of faces looks up from the rolling chaos as they prepare for battle. And, ever the showman, Sutton even appears in the scene himself, donning

Making History Dance



The Clown of Manorbier 1991 oil on canvas

an outrageous clown's hat as the Dauphin of France.

Philip Sutton was born in London's East End and spent his childhood sketching objects that caught his eye, most notably, car badges. After serving in the RAF during the Second World War, he became a beneficiary of the ex-servicemen's grant scheme, which allowed him to attend The Slade in 1949. He believes it was his car badge drawings that secured his place, where he became a protégé of the principal, William

Coldstream.

Times were difficult after graduation, but Sutton, his wife Heather and their growing family settled in Battersea, and his career began to flourish. His colourful exuberance and instinctive draftsmanship made him both popular and fashionable. Their house became a social hub, and his work was collected by figures such as Harrison Birtwistle, Albert Finney, Penelope Wilton, Arnold Wesker, Nell Dunn, Carl Davis and Lord Snowdon, who photographed the

Sutton household for an elegiac feature in *The Sunday Times Magazine*.

Elected to the Royal Academy in 1976, Sutton has exhibited in every RA Summer Exhibition since.

Now widowed and settled in Bridport, Dorset, he continues to paint most days. A forthcoming exhibition at Sladers Yard, West Bay, Bridport, running from 15th March to 11th May, will focus on 70 years of his portraiture and will include some new works.

Steeped in Health: How a Cup of Tea Can Brew Better Living

Tea is a cultural staple here in the UK. Whatever the occasion, from a celebratory afternoon tea to calming one's nerves after a shock, tea is our go-to drink. When we think of the Queen, we conjure up images of her surrounded by corgis, sipping on a delicate cup of the good stuff, pinky raised. When imagining everyday folk comforting each other, we hear Pauline Fowler offering a solution: "I'll make a cuppa tea!" This simple brew is integrated into the very fabric of our society.

Although a very British beverage, tea's history dates back to ancient China, where it was first consumed medicinally around 2737 BCE during the Tang Dynasty. In the early 17th century, Portuguese traders introduced tea to Europe, and in the 1660s, The East India Company popularised it in England. By the 18th century, tea was no longer just a luxury for the elite; it was widespread across the country.

Tea is now one of the most widely consumed beverages globally. This iconic drink hosts a myriad of health benefits that have been celebrated for centuries. Modern scientific research is now explaining why. The antioxidant properties have boosted its popularity in the health and fitness arena for over a decade, and now it is becoming clear that tea has even more to offer.

Tea drinkers will be delighted to know that their daily cuppa may be a promising approach in mitigating bone loss and reducing the risk of osteoporotic fractures as they age. This is especially important for women heading towards menopause. Oestrogen is pivotal in maintaining bone density. As levels decrease and fluctuate at this stage of life, women become increasingly susceptible to bone degeneration. Polyphenols in tea enhance osteoblastogenesis (bone cell generation) and suppress osteoclastogenesis (bone cell breakdown) in vitro. These super molecules have both anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties, resulting in remarkable osteoprotective effects.

Specifically, green and black teas have been associated with improved bone mineral density and reduced risk of fractures. This is predominantly due to flavonoids, a group of compounds found mainly in tea but also in cocoa, fruits, and some vegetables. Both green and black tea come from the same plant, but their leaves are processed differently. Green tea does not undergo oxidation like black tea does, which better preserves the plant's healthful antioxidants. For this reason, green tea is especially high in a type of catechin called epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG), which is great for bone formation and retention. The benefits do not stop at bone health. As we age, every cell and system in the body undergoes oxidative stress, a kind of biological rusting. This leads to low-level inflammation. The antioxidative and anti-inflammatory properties of tea can help slow the hands of time.

Different Types of Tea and Their Benefits

Green tea is celebrated for its anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties due to its high concentration of EGCG, a type of catechin. These compounds support overall health and promote bone health by stimulating osteoblast (bone-forming cell) activity.

Black tea is rich in flavonoids, including theaflavins and thearubigins, and offers cardiovascular benefits while potentially enhancing bone density. Its caffeine content, when consumed in moderation, is not detrimental to bone health as previously thought.

Oolong tea combines the characteristics of green and black tea due to its similar chemical profile.

White tea is the least processed of all tea varieties, retaining a high level of antioxidants that are beneficial for overall health, including bone protection.

Herbal teas, while not technically "tea," offer various other health benefits. Chamomile, for example, has a soothing effect, relaxing the drinker into a blissful night's sleep. This is due to the potent flavonoid apigenin.

Matcha tea, a type of powdered green tea, is exceptionally high in antioxidants, particularly EGCG. Consuming matcha allows for the ingestion of whole tea leaves, leading to greater health benefits.

Chai tea, often made by brewing black tea with a mix of spices such as cinnamon and ginger, not only offers a warming, rich flavour but also helps balance blood sugar due to the cinnamon and improves immune function due to the ginger.

There are so many teas to try, each with its own flavour profile and range of health benefits. They say variety is the spice of life, so why not give them all a try?

Health & Wellbeing *by Natalie Shanahan*

Need an intellectual boost?

It's no secret to avid runners: clocking in the miles can swing you between feelings of pain and sheer joy. Now, science is revealing just why lacing up your shoes and going for a run boosts your mood, sharpens your focus, and improves your intellect.

A new meta-analysis has shown substantially better academic performance among physically active university students. Not just small improvements, but a massive effect size of 3.0! For context, in science, an effect size of 0.8 is considered "large." Improvements were found in cognitive function, memory, mental health, and overall academic performance.

Neuroscientists are confirming what many runners instinctively know, that a good run can reduce stress and enhance mental clarity. Our emotional well-being has a profound physical impact on our bodies. Stress alone can manifest in inflammatory and autoimmune conditions, including IBS, psoriasis, and heart disease. It therefore makes sense that the connection works in reverse too.

At the end of 2020, a systematic review was published on the effects of physical exercise on neuroplasticity and brain function. Neuroplasticity is the brain's ability to form and reorganise synaptic connections, particularly in response to learning, experience, or recovery from injury.

The review found that exercise enhanced neuroplasticity by increasing neurotrophic factors, biomolecules that support the growth, survival, and differentiation of both developing and mature neurons. Exercise also induced cell growth and proliferation, leading to improved brain functionality.

Studies show that a quick 30-minute run can heighten cognitive processing by improving the critical flicker fusion (CFF) threshold, a visual discrimination task used to assess cortical neural arousal. Higher values are associated with increased information processing and enhanced cognitive function.

Intermittent sprints have been proven to strengthen executive function, which is vital for focusing, multitasking, and problem-solving, with noticeable benefits appearing after just 10 minutes.

New research highlights how running can effectively neutralise biological stress pathways. Brain imaging studies reveal that serious runners exhibit enhanced activity in areas linked to executive functions and working memory, further underscoring the mental edge gained from regular runs.

The good news is that any exercise will be beneficial, not just running. Studies suggest that the energy challenge posed by physical activity can affect the central nervous system by improving cellular bioenergetics, stimulating processes responsible for removing damaged cellular debris and molecules, and reducing inflammation.

Regular physical activity brings another important benefit: increased stress resilience. Evidence from animal studies suggests that a sedentary lifestyle is associated with stress vulnerability, whereas a physically active lifestyle builds resilience to stress.

So whether you prefer a swim, a bike ride, or boogying the night away, you can boost your intellect, improve your memory, and destress your soul!



Then go for a run!

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One of the Most Iconic Matches in Chess History

As spring returns the bright colours of nature to us and, “April is the cruellest month, breeding lilacs out of the dead land,” we rejoice and console in equal measure, as the sharpness of life’s cycles is delineated in long hopes and sharp sorrows.

New enterprises in chess, such as the BBC’s Chess Masters: The End Game, where 12 skilled and passionate amateur players compete against each other to see who will be top of the board, is a welcome venture in expanding the chess profile. The programme’s introductory literature states, “... it is the first time chess has been broadcast on mainstream television in the UK for 30 years!” Certainly, in Europe and other continents, chess has been part of mainstream television broadcasts, although the internet and chess platforms have now taken up much of that live coverage, expanding the game’s reach significantly.

BBC Two’s introduction, of course, refers to Channel 4’s live coverage of the World Chess Championship held at the Savoy Theatre, London, in 1993 between our challenger to the world title and crown, Nigel Short, and the world champion, Garry Kasparov. Channel 4 covered the event and broadcast live each day’s game from early afternoon until late evening over the entirety of the championship. Carol Vorderman made her debut as the programme’s presenter, and grandmasters at Simpson’s-in-the-Strand analysed the games for viewers. I was the official artist for the event, and a large drawing I made of the two contestants in panoramic view on stage at the Savoy, including Princess Diana, who attended the championship on multiple days, watching from the Royal Box, was used as the final TV image of each day’s play.

The current BBC programme, which began on Monday, 10th March at 8pm, features 12 players from all backgrounds battling it out across a series of rapid chess games before one is crowned and given the title of Chess Master. It is hosted by Sue Perkins, with GM David Howell providing insight into the strategies (or lack thereof) and playing skills of the contestants. “It’s all about psychology, strategy, smart thinking, and nerves of steel!” The show is also available on iPlayer. It runs over eight episodes, featuring the 12 contestants, Howell, and former Traitors contestant Anthony Mathurin. Contestants’ profiles and an interview with Sue Perkins discussing the series can be found at www.bbc.co.uk.

In the column marked for consolation,

on 27th February, Boris Vasilievich Spassky, born 30th January, 1937, passed away. His death has rightly engendered a crescendo of articles, comments, and obituaries, with former world champions such as Garry Kasparov praising him as the chess grandmaster “who played the game of the century!”

Spassky, the 10th world champion, was 88 years old at the time of his passing and was considered one of the sport’s first mainstream stars. He was “an independent spirit and true chess artist”, a genius excelling in complex and dynamic middlegame positions, states FIDE. As the 10th world champion, he began his serious chess career when he became a grandmaster at the age of 18, memorably making a global impact by qualifying for the Candidates Tournament in Amsterdam in 1956 at just 19. Over the years, his triumphs included victories over Keres, Geller, and Tal in 1965, earning him the right to challenge Tigran Petrosian. However, he lost their title match in Moscow in 1966. The following year, he won the Candidates Tournament again, qualifying for a second world championship challenge, and this time, he defeated the 9th world champion, Petrosian.

Petrosian, born in 1929 and passing in 1984, was “one of the greatest defensive players in history”. He was born in Tbilisi, Georgia, to Armenian parents.

Spassky’s worldwide reputation in chess became firmly established when he played the World Chess Championship match against the American Bobby Fischer in Reykjavik in 1972, billed as a Cold War Showdown. It was “one of the most iconic matches in chess history” and a symbol of the geopolitical rivalry between the USA and the Soviet Union. Fischer’s victory “propelled chess into the mass media spotlight”. Spassky, however, gained global admiration for his dignity and sportsmanlike demeanour in defeat, conceding his crown and title to his Western adversary.

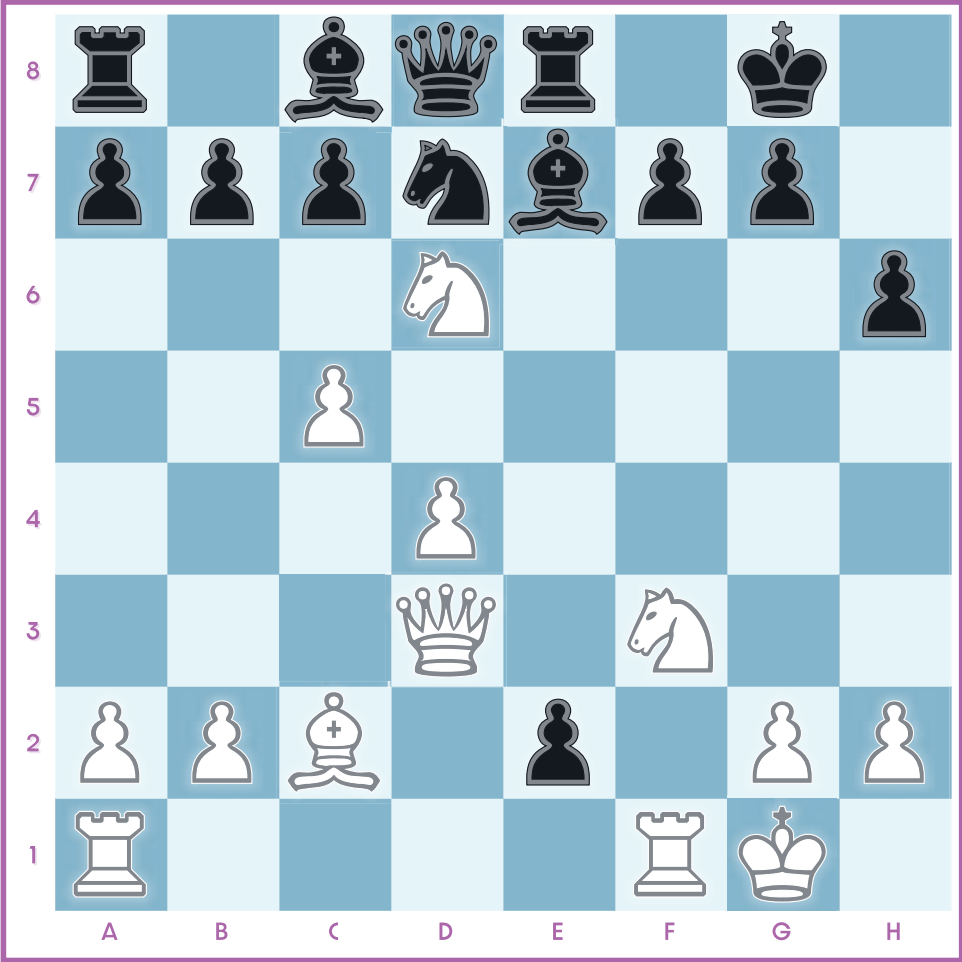
The unusual beginnings of the tournament further enhanced Spassky’s global reputation as a self-determined player. When Fischer failed to attend the opening ceremony, Spassky agreed to postpone the first round of the tournament. Moscow insisted he must claim victory by default and return home, but the friendship between the two players had strengthened over time, and Spassky overruled Moscow’s firm directives. Jim Slater, the London backer of the event, recognised its global significance, as it was front-page news worldwide, and decided to double the

The Challenge

In honour of the recent passing of a great player, it is fitting that we give them their dues and dedicate one of their great games to them! The game in question is probably one of Spassky’s most well-known, given that it was used in the opening sequence of the James Bond film From Russia with Love, the Smersh Gambit! It was originally played in the USSR Championship in 1960 in Leningrad, Round 16, on 20th February. King’s Gambit

Accepted, Modern Defence C36. Boris Spassky (White) v David Bronstein (Black). Bronstein, playing Black, had played 14... e2, and Spassky, as White, replied with 15. Nd6—see diagram. White ignored Black’s pawn attacking their rook on f1 by moving his knight from e4 to d6. Can you see why White ignored the threat and seemingly sacrificed his knight?

The solution is below



prize fund, “an action that even had hardened Muscovites, who sided with Spassky, jumping out of their seats in adulation!”

As history has shown, Spassky lost the championship match. However, when Fischer ultimately won, Spassky stood up and applauded him in admiration. He later said, “As a chess king, I have always tried to fortify and unite the multinational kingdom of chess, not to cause division within it. I will remain faithful to that principle in my old age.”

Garry Kasparov said of Spassky, “Boris was never above befriending and mentoring the next generation, especially those of us who, like him, didn’t fit comfortably into the Soviet machine.” Kasparov continued, “His rise as a prodigy, conquest of

the crown against the invincible Petrosian on the second attempt, and decades of elite play are too often lost in the shadow of his dramatic title loss to Bobby Fischer in 1972 and the circus Fischer turned it into.”

“But Spassky always wanted to play, and he handled the situation, as above, with impressive dignity. While his chess justified the ‘universal’ label that frequently follows his name, his aggressive, gambiteering style produced countless masterpieces.”

Spassky played seven times for the Soviet Olympiad team (1962–1978). In 1976, he emigrated to France and competed under the French flag in three more Olympiads (1984–1988).

The Solution

15... Nf8, forced, as White's next move, 16. Qh7, would be a checkmate! The game continued... 16. Nxf7, exf1=Q+. 17. Rxf1, Bf5. 18. Qxf5, Qd7. 19. Qf4, Bf6. 20. N3e5, Qe7. 21. Bb3, Bxe5. 22. Nxex5+, Kh7. 23. Qe4+... against GM David Norwood at The Chelsea Arts Club many moons ago, and upon going into an endgame with equal numbers of pawns and kings, there was no way for Bronstein. I had Bronstein seated behind and short-term defensive attempts by I-O. A great game with sensational attacks me watching my simul game when I played draw, which I accepted, and David Bronstein jumped up, shook my hand, and said, “Well played, Barry!” He was a lovely man, very courteous and kind. I also thought—that’s the hand that had shaken Spassky’s hand in their Leningrad encounter in 1960, a rare treat for me!



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