



Hugh Belsey, a graduate of the Universities of Manchester and Birmingham, has lectured to groups in Europe, America, Australia and Britain. For twenty-three years he was the curator of Gainsborough's House in Sudbury where he

formed one of the largest collections of the artist's work. In 2004 he was awarded an MBE in recognition of his museum work. He has taught at the Universities of Melbourne and Buckingham and curated many exhibitions and he has also appeared as an expert witness in both the BBC series *Fake or Fortune?* and in BBC4's *Britain's Lost Masterpieces*. Yale University Press published his catalogue of portraits by Thomas Gainsborough in February 2019 which was awarded the William W B Berger Prize for Art History in 2020. As a sequel, he is now working on a catalogue of the work of Gainsborough Dupont.

Since the first of Hugh Belsey's Talks in 2004 the courses have become an eagerly awaited annual event and are now also available as recordings. Those signing up for the course are offered a place on two trips which supplement the Talks. Since 2017 Hugh has guided a popular four day residential tour of some of the country's finest private art collections. See the website for details.

photo Julia Hedgecoe

### British Artists at home and abroad: *finding a marketplace*

In the first half of the 18th century European countries were at war. Britain stayed well away, consolidated its democracy and aesthetically tried to catch up with its continental neighbours. London was the honeypot and the most able provincial artists came to work there to compete with those that were already established in the capital. Later on, success led to a need to satisfy the market for luxury goods and for raw materials. Spices, cotton, labour and much else were needed to meet the demand and pressures between competing European powers resulted in conflict at sea and on land. This brought considerable wealth to the country and architecture, painting and sculpture flourished.

Artistic activity was regularised with the creation of the Royal Academy and the opportunity of displaying artists works in one room brought a competitive spirit to artistic endeavours. Artists from Scotland, Ireland and Wales made an impact on the London art scene and artists began to specialise. For example, theatrical portraits helped publicise the thriving theatre, sporting painting was in vogue and reached extraordinary heights of realism, and many an eighteenth-century image was reproduced in print providing another income source and ensuring that artists' work was better known.



James Latham  
Bishop Robert Clayton  
with his wife Katherine,  
c.1740, oil on canvas,  
128x175cm. National  
Gallery of Ireland,  
Dublin

## TALKS

### 1 Historical Background

The first half of the century was peaceful and introspective with interesting developments in democratic government. The taming of the Scots and the following fifty years was stained with battles between rival powers in Europe, and British conflict in America and India. At the same time a developing infrastructure provided the background to a progressive shift from agriculture to industrialisation.

### 2 Art for Charities

With concern for London's orphan children a childless sea captain, Thomas Coram, created the Foundling Hospital and it became one of the most fashionable charities in London. William Hogarth and Georg Frederic Handel were quick to realise that this new space provided an opportunity for contemporary artists to showcase their work and that encouraged other corporate groups to use similar tactics.

### 3 The Exhibition

The Society of Artists began holding an annual exhibition of paintings in 1761. Just eight years later the baton passed to the Royal Academy, governed by a Royal Charter. It provided teaching, membership and a competitive annual exhibition. It was modeled on the French equivalent, founded in 1648, and under its first president, Sir Joshua Reynolds, it adopted similar priorities of taste.



*Sir Joshua Reynolds, Self-portrait, c.1780, oil on panel, 127x101.6cm  
Royal Academy of Arts, London*

*'Intriguing . . .*

#### 4 History Painting

History Painting was considered to be the noblest genre for painting and sculpture, but in Britain there were few patrons who shared this interest. Some artists were uncompromising, such as James Barry and Gavin Hamilton, but others adapted the demand for portraits with a classical approach producing a compromising hybrid.



*Thomas Jones  
A Wall in Naples, c.1782  
oil on paper laid on  
canvas, 11.4x16cm  
National Gallery, London*

#### 5 The Welsh Contribution

Two artists, both born in Wales made major contributions to landscape painting. Both were inspired by their visits to Italy. Richard Wilson was in Rome between 1751 and 1757 and his pupil, Thomas Jones, a Welsh landowner, also visited Italy in the early 1780s where he produced remarkable naturalistic views of buildings in Naples.

#### 6 The Scottish Contribution

After the Union between Scotland and England in 1707, the artistic community not only served Scottish patrons but some, like Allan Ramsay, travelled to London. Other artists whose reputation deserves better recognition include David Allan, Alexander Nasmyth and Sir Henry Raeburn.

*brilliantly diverse . . .*

#### 7 The Irish Contribution

Ireland had a ready supply of painters to satisfy local patrons. Some came east to further their careers but many stayed in Ireland. This Talk will look at William Latham, Nathaniel Hone, Hugh Douglas Hamilton, William Ashford, Thomas Roberts and Francis Wheatley.

#### 8 Moving to India

At some point artists such as Johan Zoffany, Thomas Hickey, Arthur William Devis and the miniaturist John Smart travelled to India to advance their careers and meet the expectations of the Anglo-Indian community. Many showed western families with natives in conversation pieces while others showed an admiration for the exotic.



*Johan Zoffany  
Colonel Mordaunt's Cock Match, 1784-86  
oil on canvas, 103.9x150cm. Tate, London*

*puts everything in context . . .*

## 9 The Theatrical Portrait

The popularity of the theatre in the eighteenth century and the fame of many actors were recorded in views of stage productions and portraits of actors in their most famous rôles. They were frequently used as illustrations in monthly theatrical journals to increase the fame of their subjects.

## 10 Sculpture

Two sculptors from the Low Countries developed the sculptured bust in Britain during the middle years of the century. Louis-François Roubilliac and Joseph Nollekens, whose father had emigrated from Antwerp, developed the form. Famed for their portrait busts, they also sculpted full-size works for institutions and commemorative monuments.



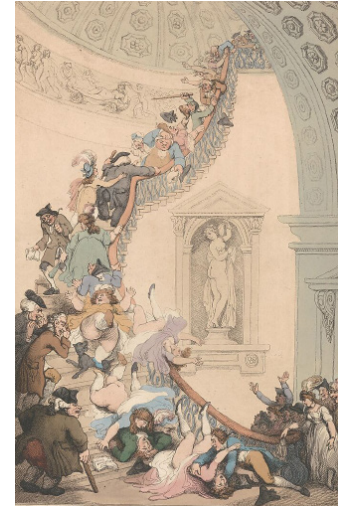
*with historical anecdotes . . .*

## 11 Sporting Art

Horses were of great importance. They provided the means of transport, they were the sport of kings, they supplied military might and they were celebrated in art and in architecture. Early in the century John Wootton recorded the appearance of the first thoroughbreds and the genre had an injection of anatomical accuracy with the brilliant work of George Stubbs.

*left*  
George Stubbs  
*The Reapers*, 1784  
oil on panel, 90.2x137.2cm  
Tate, London

*right*  
Thomas Rowlandson  
*Exhibition 'Stare' Case*,  
1811, etching, hand-coloured  
47.6x33.2 cm  
Metropolitan Museum of Art  
New York



## 12 Selling to a wider market: the print

Prints provided material for the bargain basement of the art world. Mezzotints were frequently made in order to popularise an image and, if it was a portrait, the sitter. Similarly, etched cartoons and caricatures highlighted social observations and the political wrangles of the day, into a stark and critical perspective.

*and amusing asides!'*

## VENUES & DATES

### Lavenham Village Hall at 11am

*October* Wednesday 23 (1), Monday 28 (2)  
*November* Monday 4 (3), Monday 18 (4), Monday 25 (5)  
*December* Monday 2 (6)  
*January* Monday 20 (7), Monday 27 (8)  
*February* Monday 3 (9), Monday 17 (10), Monday 24 (11)  
*March* Monday 3 (12)

### Ipswich County Library at 2.30pm **new venue**

*October* Wednesday 23 (1), Monday 28 (2)  
*November* Monday 4 (3), Monday 18 (4), Monday 25 (5)  
*December* Monday 2 (6)  
*January* Monday 20 (7), Monday 27 (8)  
*February* Monday 3 (9), Monday 17 (10), Monday 24 (11)  
*March* Monday 3 (12)

### Friends' Meeting House, Great Bradfield at 10.30am

*October* Tuesday 22 (1), Tuesday 29 (2)  
*November* Tuesday 5 (3), Tuesday 19 (4), Tuesday 26 (5)  
*December* Tuesday 3 (6)  
*January* Tuesday 21 (7), Tuesday 28 (8)  
*February* Tuesday 4 (9), Tuesday 18 (10), Tuesday 25 (11)  
*March* Tuesday 4 (12)

### Baptist Chapel, Saffron Walden at 2.30pm **new venue**

*October* Tuesday 22 (1), Tuesday 29 (2)  
*November* Tuesday 5 (3), Tuesday 19 (4), Tuesday 26 (5)  
*December* Tuesday 3 (6)  
*January* Tuesday 21 (7), Tuesday 28 (8)  
*February* Tuesday 4 (9), Tuesday 18 (10), Tuesday 25 (11)  
*March* Tuesday 4 (12)

### Church Hall, Aldeburgh at 10.45am

*October* Friday 25 (1),  
*November* Friday 1 (2), Friday 8 (3), Friday 15 (4),  
Friday 29 (5)  
*December* Friday 6 (6)  
*January* Friday 31 (7)  
*February* Friday 7 (8), Friday 14 (9), Friday 21 (10),  
Friday 28 (11)  
*March* Friday 7 (12)

Complementary refreshments will be served 45 minutes before the start of the Talk. There will be an opportunity to ask questions afterwards.

### Recorded Talks

If you would prefer to listen to the Talks at home you can purchase them at the same price, recorded separately. They are fully illustrated using the most up-to-date digital equipment and last for one hour. Each Talk will be available the week after the venue Talks, and a link will be sent by email to access the recording via Zoom.

Order and pay online at [www.hughbelsey.co.uk](http://www.hughbelsey.co.uk) or email: [belseyrecordings@gmail.com](mailto:belseyrecordings@gmail.com)

Members who miss a booked venue Talk can also request a recorded version by emailing: [belseyrecordings@gmail.com](mailto:belseyrecordings@gmail.com)

## VENUE & BOOKING

*please tick*

Lavenham Village Hall

Ipswich County Library

Friends Meeting House, Great Bardfield

Baptist Chapel, Saffron Walden

Church Hall, Aldeburgh

*Please book the following tickets at £15 each*

1 Historical Background

2 Art for Charities

3 The Exhibition

4 History Painting

5 The Welsh Contribution

6 The Scottish Contribution

7 The Irish Contribution

8 Moving to India

9 The Theatrical Portrait

10 Sculpture

11 Sporting Art

12 Selling to a Wider Market: The Print

BOOKING FORM

Please book ..... ticket(s) at £125 each  
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# Hugh Belsey

*venues in*

Lavenham

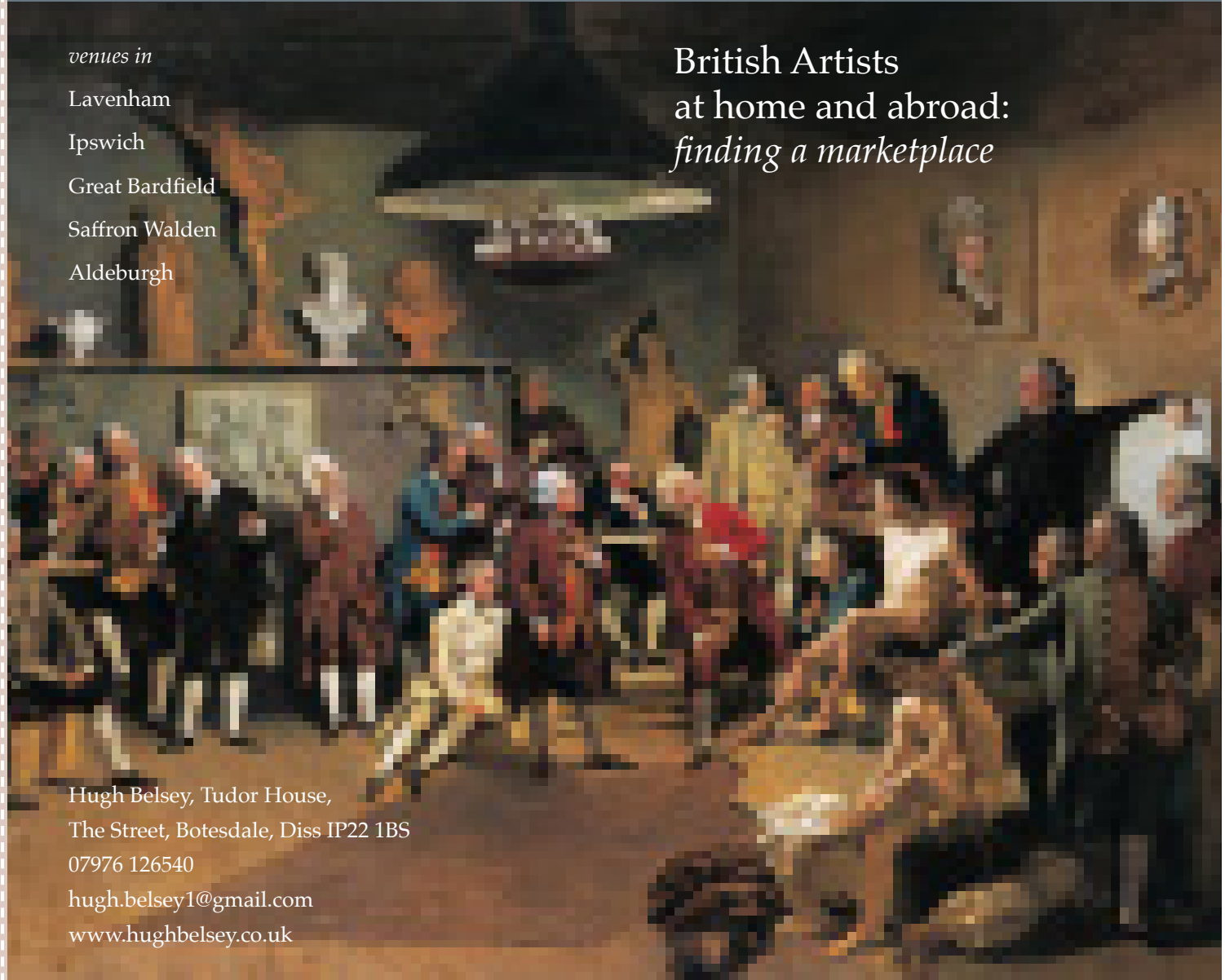
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British Artists  
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*cover picture*  
Johan Zoffany, *The Portraits of the Academicians of the Royal Academy, 1771-72*  
oil on canvas, *The Royal Collection (detail)*