

gThe Arts Society Wealden
Special Interest Day: “The Arts and Crafts Movement”
Wednesday 21st October 2026
Heathfield Community Centre, TN21 0XG

Joanna Banham



Biography:

Jo Banham is a freelance curator, lecturer and writer. From 2006-2016 she was Head of Adult Learning at the Victoria & Albert Museum, and before that Head of Learning and Access at the National Portrait Gallery, and Head of Public Programmes at Tate Britain. She has also been Curator of Leighton House and Assistant Keeper at the Whitworth Art Gallery. She has published on many aspects of Victorian and early 20th century decoration and interiors. She recently curated an exhibition on William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement for the Juan March Fundacion in Madrid and the Museu Nacional d'Art Catalunya in Barcelona and she is currently writing a book on the History of Wallpaper. She is also Director of the Victorian Society Summer School.

The Arts and Crafts Movement

The birth of the Arts and Crafts movement in Britain in the late 19th century marked the beginning of a change in the value society placed on how things were made. This was a reaction to not only the damaging effects of industrialisation but also the relatively low status of the decorative arts. Arts and Crafts reformed the design and manufacture of everything from buildings to jewellery. The Arts and Crafts movement also contributed to a new appreciation of the [decorative arts](#) throughout [Europe](#).

The English reformer, poet and designer [William Morris](#), who, in 1861, founded a firm of interior decorators and manufacturers—Morris, Marshall, Faulkner, and Company (after 1875, Morris and Company)—dedicated to recapturing the spirit and quality of [medieval](#) craftsmanship. Morris and his associates (among them the architect Philip Webb and the painters [Ford Madox Brown](#) and [Edward](#)

[Burne-Jones](#)) produced handcrafted [metalwork](#), [jewellery](#), [wallpaper](#), textiles, [furniture](#), and books. The “firm” was run as an artists’ collaborative, with the painters providing the designs for skilled craftsmen to produce. To this date many of their designs are copied by designers and furniture manufacturers.

10am – Arrival

Lecture 1 – The Art and Craft Movement: Origins, Inspiration and Ideas

This lecture sets the scene for The Arts and Crafts movement that emerged in Britain during the late 19th century as a social and artistic reaction against industrialisation and mass-produced, low quality goods. It discusses debates about the excesses of commercial design and explores the influence of William Morris, John Ruskin and many other artists and designers who championed functional design and natural motifs .

11.30am Coffee

Lecture 2 – Simplicity and Splendour: Arts and Crafts Designers and Interiors

The Arts and Crafts Movement emphasised traditional craftsmanship, natural materials, and, often, an asymmetrical, vernacular style. This lecture reviews the inspiration and appearance of Arts and Crafts interiors and their radical rejection of cluttered Victorian styles in favour of simplicity, honesty and a more pared down aesthetic. Key figures include Philip Webb, C. F. A Voysey, E Gimson and a number of ‘Crafty Women’ whose role is often been overlooked today.

1.30pm Close

Cost: Arts Society members: £40

Non-members £45

Note: members of other Arts Societies pay the member rate.

To book a place, please email John Larum (Membership Secretary) – johnlarum@hotmail.com – with your contact details.

Please pay by Bank Transfer: The Arts Society Wealden. (Reference your name.)

Sort Code: 60-10-30. Account: 11680911

Alternatively, cheques payable to The Arts Society Wealden. Please send cheques to John Larum, Membership Secretary, Two Hoots, Vines Cross Farm, Vines Cross, Heathfield. TN21 9AT.

Payments will be acknowledged by email.

PLEASE REPLY BY WEDNESDAY 30 SEPTEMBER 2026.

