

Paul Mellon Lectures 2025 (London, 17 Oct–15 Dec 25)

The National Gallery, London, Oct 17–Dec 15, 2025

Alice Read, London

Announcing the Paul Mellon Lectures 2025.

Modern, Minimal, Practical and Social: the Art of Rasheed Araeen
Delivered by Courtney J. Martin

17 October: Rasheed Araeen: "What Is Black Art?"

Opening the series, this lecture offers an overview of Araeen's practice from the early 1960s to the present to frame his key artworks, concepts and terms.

20 October: Structure, Not Sculpture, Rasheed Araeen 1964–75

Central to Araeen's mid-career and later work were his early sculptures, which he defined as "structures". Alongside an otherwise minimalist practice, Araeen began to write about his objects, shifting his definition of them as sculpture into the more sociocultural designation of structure. Structures relied on viewer engagement and invited interaction with other objects, viewers and each other, changing the economy of space within the exhibition. These structures showed the signature of Araeen's interest in low technology, ephemerality, roughness and an overall surface crudeness taking shape.

12 December: Wolverhampton 1982, "Art & Black Consciousness" vs. Form, Functioning and Future

In the autumn of 1982, Araeen was invited by the Wolverhampton Young Black Artists' (WYBA) to the First National Black Art Convention to discuss the Form, Functioning and Future of Black Art. By the early 1980s, Araeen's public discussions of Black art in London cast him as its founding practitioner. In that moment, his role in shaping the discourse of Black art was aided by younger artists of African, Asian and Caribbean descent. These artists realised Araeen's conception of an avant-garde art that was both politically driven in content and materially distressed.

15 December: The Other Story and After

By the 1980s, Araeen's editorial and curatorial endeavours culminated in *The Other Story: Afro-Asian Artists in Post-war Britain*, supposedly the first major museum exhibition of non-white British artists in Britain. Curated by Araeen at the Hayward Gallery in London, *The Other Story* served as a compendium of the work of Black artists in the previous decade toward recognition in the British and art publics, such as the abstract painter Frank Bowling. Bowling's inclusion in the exhibition and Anish Kapoor's refusal to be a part of it shaped a discourse around what abstract art had come to mean in Britain by the end of the 1980s.

About the Paul Mellon Lecture Series

Named in honour of the philanthropist and collector of British art, Paul Mellon (1907–99), these biennial lectures are given by a distinguished historian of British art and were inaugurated in 1994 when Professor Francis Haskell delivered the first series at the National Gallery in London. The model for the series was the Andrew W. Mellon lectures, established in 1949 in honour of Paul Mellon's father, the founder of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. Co-organised by the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art (PMC) and the Yale Center for British Art (YCBA), the lectures are biennial, given by a distinguished historian of British art. This lecture series will take place at both the National Gallery in London and at the Yale Center for British Art in New Haven.

About the speaker

Courtney J. Martin became the Executive Director of the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation in 2024. Previously she was the Paul Mellon Director of the Yale Center for British Art. An art historian, curator and professor, Courtney began working with the New York-based Dia Art Foundation in 2015 and was appointed Deputy Director and Chief Curator in 2017. She previously taught at Brown University and worked at the Ford Foundation. She earned a PhD in art history from Yale University. She is on the Board of Directors of the Henry Moore Foundation, The Chinati Foundation and the Center for Curatorial Leadership.

Book

tickets:

<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/events/paul-mellon-lectures-2025-courtney-j-martin-2025>

Reference:

ANN: Paul Mellon Lectures 2025 (London, 17 Oct-15 Dec 25). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 12, 2025 (accessed Sep 12, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/50562>>.