

## To Make the Heart Dance: Gainsborough and Fashion



A visual Gainsborough feast which will '*make the heart dance*' – his own words used to describe the role of painting and its effect on the human spirit. The lecture explores Thomas Gainsborough's attitudes to fashion and fashionable society, as seen through his paintings, letters and the diaries of his contemporaries.

A selection of his major portrait commissions in Bath and London will be discussed alongside the key influences on his earlier work. The role of Bath as a fashionable spa town, frequented by both high society and aspirational social climbers alike, was also home to his sister, Mary Gibbon, a fashionable 'modiste' strategically located near his studio.

Gainsborough's strong views on contemporary clothing and his love of 'silks and satins, pearls and trifling ornaments', differed hugely from those of his great rival, Sir Joshua Reynolds. Comparisons and contrasts will be made between the paintings and actual examples of C18 men's and women's fine clothing and accessories selected from international museum collections such as the V&A in London, The Metropolitan Museum in New York, and the Musée de la Mode in Paris.



