



newsletter

The Paul Mellon Lectures
2004 by David Solkin

The Epic of Common Life

Genre Painting and Social Change in Early
Nineteenth-Century Britain. **Autumn 2004**
at the National Gallery, London.

This year's Paul Mellon Lectures take as their subject the new school of painting of everyday life that emerged to great acclaim in Britain during the period spanning the Napoleonic Wars and the Great Reform Bill. Initiated by David Wilkie's 'Village Politicians' of 1806, and reaching a monumental summation almost twenty-five years later in the work of Benjamin Robert Haydon, this movement registered the deeply ambivalent feelings of a nation in the throes of accelerating economic growth and of conflict both at home and abroad: what emerges from the imagery of its most ambitious artists is a widespread sense that the traditional boundaries between country and city are in the process of dissolving, and that a more regularised present is everywhere encroaching upon the customary past. In its fascination with the compression of space and time, early nineteenth-century British genre painting locates itself at the start of a trajectory linking the art of the Age of Revolution with the postmodern culture of the present day.

David H. Solkin is Professor of the Social History of Art at the Courtauld Institute of Art, and a leading authority on British art from the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries. Chief among his numerous publications are *Richard Wilson: The Landscape of Reaction* (1982), *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (1993), and (as editor and co-author), *Art on The Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House 1780-1836* (2001).

The lectures are the sixth in a series given biennially by an invited specialist in British art, held at the National Gallery and supported by The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art.



'Inattention' by Thomas Heaphy (1808) Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

25 October

New Adventures in Space and Time:
Reconfiguring Rural Life in the Age of
Revolution

1 November

Trouble in Arcadia

8 November

The Subjects and Spaces of Surveillance

15 November

The Colonisation of Carnival

22 November

The End of Olde England: Remaking the
Nation after Waterloo

Tickets are £12.50 for the whole series
or £3 for individual lectures. For more
information or to request a booking form
please contact:

Advance Ticket Sales

The National Gallery,
Trafalgar Square
London
WC2N 5DN
Tel. 020 7747 2888

(information only; please note that telephone
bookings cannot be taken)

Lectures take place on Mondays at 6:30
pm in the Sainsbury Wing Lecture Theatre
at the National Gallery.