In British art, the garden assumed a visual presence in the 1600s through portraits of estate owners, often taking the form of a background, real or imagined, while by the eighteenth century it was established in its own right, often in the form of estates which had undergone extensive - and expensive - emparkment. Here, too, the artist played a crucial role. Houses, too, were portrayed in the context of gardens and the wider landscape, as emblems of their owner’s taste and sophistication. By the nineteenth century there was an increasing recognition on the part of the artist that more humble gardens were deserving of attention, as interest grew in the depiction of cottage gardens, vegetable plots, and urban garden spaces. The vantage point of the artist changed too. While earlier artists had focussed upon the wider garden landscape, or ’prospect’, artists began to take a greater interest in the local and particular, often capturing the view from their own studio into their own gardens. Artists, too, took an active role in the cultivation and arrangements of plants, not just as specimens, but also as aesthetic statements and reflections of their own creative impulse.

Over the course of five weeks the speakers will discuss the work of a whole range artists - historic, modern and contemporary - who have shaped our view of the garden. The gardens themselves range across the British Isles from Scotland to the South coast, from those which are preserved only through visual records left by the artist, to green spaces that even now continue to challenge our perception and expectation of what a garden should or could be.

No prior art historical knowledge is necessary.

27 September
Introduction
Christopher Woodward

4 October
Repton and the landscaped garden
Stephen Daniels

11 October
’Country Gardens’
Martin Postle

18 October
Land Art
Nicholas Alfrey and Joy Sleeman

25 October
Artist in focus: Eileen Hogan
Todd Longstaffe-Gowan