

Call for Papers: Dickens Day 2025 - 'Dickens and Art'

Saturday 11 October 2025, Senate House London

I am not mechanically acquainted with the art of painting, and have no other means of judging of a picture than as I see it resembling and refining upon nature, and presenting graceful combinations of forms and colours.

Charles Dickens, Pictures from Italy

We are pleased to announce the call for papers for this year's Dickens Day on the topic of 'Dickens and Art'. Dickens's frank admission in *Pictures from Italy* that he was not mechanically acquainted with art betrays an insecurity about his own formative education, yet throughout his writings we see a wide-reaching interrogation of art, be that paintings, sculpture or architecture. From the arch insights of Miss La Creevy in *Nicholas Nickleby* ('there are only two styles of portrait painting; the serious and the smirk') to the solemn and ominous gallery of Chesney Wold in *Bleak House*, Dickens draws upon art as an opportunity for character insight and social commentary.



Beyond the novels, Dickens was great friends with artist Daniel Maclise, father-in-law to the artist Charles Allston Collins, and an infamous critic of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. Just as significantly, the artistic representations of Dickens's own works are a fundamental factor in his enduring popularity, from the original illustrations by Phiz, George Cruikshank, Marcus Stone and others, to the rich and varied afterlife of Dickens's works and characters in everything from cigarette cards to oil paintings, our relationship with Dickens has long been informed by the visualisation of his writing by others.

We invite proposals for 20-minute papers on any aspect of the theme and warmly encourage Dickensians and scholars of all backgrounds and career stages to apply. Topics could include but are not limited to:

- Dickens on art – his opinions, critical views and responses to the visual arts.
- Dickens in art – portraits, sketches, illustrations, photographs.
- Dickens and the artists – his personal and professional relations with artists.
- Dickens and aesthetics – concepts of beauty and the visual in his writings.
- Dickens's illustrators – artists as collaborators, and the impact of illustrations.
- Art as plot device – the use of portraits and paintings in plotting and characterisation.
- Art based on Dickens's works – paintings, sculptures, pottery and other merchandise.
- The afterlife of Dickens in art – later illustrations and adaptations, comic books and graphic novels.

Please send proposals (maximum 300 words) together with a brief biography (maximum 100 words) to Pete Orford, Emma Curry, Hadas Elber-Aviram and Claire Wood at dickensdayuk@gmail.com

The deadline for paper proposals is 30 June 2025.