

at the Institut français, London

2025

MAY 5-17

BEYOND WORDS

LITERATURE
FESTIVAL

TALKS
READINGS
FILMS

INSTITUT
FRANÇAIS
Royaume-Uni

Beyond Words Calendar

Monday 5 May

14.00 - Film - Blue Road: The Edna O'Brien Story

Wednesday 7 May

18.30 - Film + Q&A - Acting

Thursday 8 May

19.00 - Talk - Navigating Memory and Identity with Karim Kattan

Friday 9 May

20.15 - Film - Limonov: The Ballad of Eddie

Saturday 10 May

14.00 - Film - Ethel & Ernest

15.00 - Talk - Anne Berest: Gabriële

15.45 - Film - Limonov: The Ballad of Eddie

17.00 - Talk - Philippe Sands & Bruno Patino

18.30 - Film - Hot Milk

Sunday 11 May

11.00 - Film - Acting

Monday 12 May

18.00 - Film + Q&A - T.S.

Eliot's Four Quartets

19.00 - Talk - Victor Hugo: Astonishing Drawings

Wednesday 14 May

20.30 - Film - Blue Road: The Edna O'Brien Story

Thursday 15 May

18.00 - Book Club - Le Palais des deux collines by Karim Kattan

Friday 16 May

19.45 - Film - Acting

Saturday 17 May

13.20 - Film - Limonov: The Ballad of Eddie

18.15 - Film - Jane Austen Wrecked My Life

From Wednesday 14 May to

Friday 25 July - Exhibition - Postcards for Perec



The cheerful castle (detail), c. 1847 Photo: CC0 Paris Musées / Maisons Victor Hugo.

From 5 to 17 May, the Institut français goes Beyond Words and takes us on a literary journey through discussions, debates, readings and screenings.

Audiences can expect the best of contemporary French literature in English translation, the latest and most inspiring publications from both sides of the Channel and a great line-up including acclaimed authors and new voices.

The programme also includes a selection of exciting new literary adaptations as well as a celebration of films that explore the relation between stage and screen.

With special thanks to Florence and Vincent Gombault, and to the Friends of the French Institute Trust for their support to the festival.

The Art of Acting

Acting

FILM + TALK

Dir. Sophie Fiennes, 2024, 145 mins

An immersive documentary in the world of theatre company Cheek by Jowl from acclaimed director Sophie Fiennes (*Grace Jones: Bloodlight and Bami, A Perverter's Guide to Cinema*), looking in depth at the acting process, from voice exercises to text analysis and the immersion in performance. In an old castle, theatre director Declan Donnellan leads a dozen young actors as they work on Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Full of wit, often funny, this film is as inspiring as it is a celebration of artistic collaboration and a reminder of the enduring strength of classic plays.

Wed 7 May – 18.30 + Q&A with Sophie Fiennes, Declan Donnellan & Nick Ormerod, joint Artistic Director of Cheek by Jowl

Sun 11 May – 11.00

Fri 16 May – 19.45

various prices | in English



©Matt Humphrey

T.S. Eliot's Four Quartets

FILM

Dir. Sophie Fiennes, 2022, 82 mins

Ralph Fiennes's exquisite performance of T. S. Eliot's poetic masterpiece is dynamically translated from stage to screen by director Sophie Fiennes. Written by Nobel Prize winner Eliot in the shadow of the Second World War, the poem is a searching examination of who – and what – we are. This celebrated meditation on human experience, time, and the divine offers up questions, imagery, and emotions that bear a powerful relevance to our present day.

Mon 12 May – 18.00 + Q&A with Sophie and Ralph Fiennes

£20, conc. £18 | in English



Karim Kattan Special

Navigating Memory and Identity with Karim Kattan TALK

Meet Palestinian author **Karim Kattan** as he delves into his haunting novel of exile, memory, homecoming, and loss: ***The Palace on the Higher Hill***. Originally published in French in 2021, the novel follows Faysal's return to his family's abandoned home in Palestine, where he confronts the ghosts of both personal and political pasts. Winner of the 2021 Prix des Cinq Continents de la Francophonie, his novel offers an intimate, politically charged portrait of displacement, echoing *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Brideshead Revisited*.

He will be in conversation with **Will Forrester**, Head of Literature Programmes at English PEN.

Thu 8 May - 19.00

£10, conc. £8, students £5 | in English



Karim Kattan ©Hela Chelli



Will Forrester ©Mark Guest

Le Palais des deux collines by Karim Kattan BOOK CLUB

Faysal receives a mysterious letter about the death of an aunt he can't remember. Leaving his lover and his life in Europe behind, he returns to the village of his birth in Palestine and to his family's extraordinary, deserted house, the palace on the higher hill. Explore further Karim Kattan's novel *Le Palais des deux collines* with this special reading group in French.

Thu 15 May - 18.00

£7, conc. & students £5 | in French



Anne Berest: Art, Desire, and Disruption

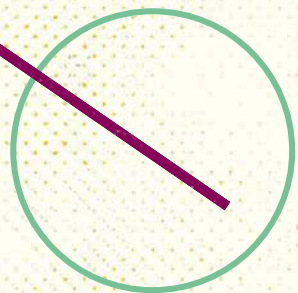
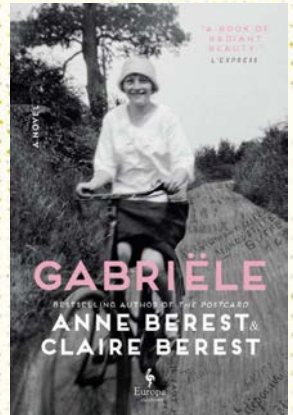
Anne Berest: Gabriële

TALK

Meet French author **Anne Berest** (*The Postcard*), who co-wrote with her sister Claire Berest, ***Gabriële***, an atmospheric, exuberant novel based on the life of their great grandmother. It tells the story of Gabriële Buffet, a pioneering French woman and her relationships with artists Francis Picabia and Marcel Duchamp. Their tempestuous love triangle helped redefine art and creativity in the years leading up to WWI.

Sat 10 May – 15.00

£10, conc. £8, students £5 | in English



Revisiting History

Philippe Sands & Bruno Patino in the Shadows of Justice

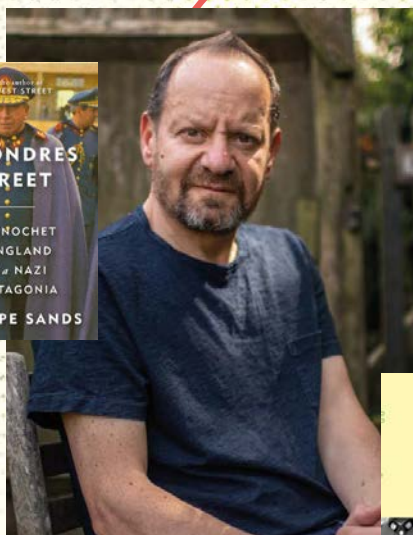
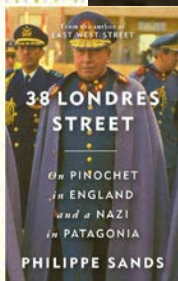
TALK

Join Franco-British lawyer and author **Philippe Sands** as he presents his book, *38 Londres Street: On Impunity, Pinochet in England and a Nazi in Patagonia*. Through a compelling blend of memoir, detective story, and courtroom drama, Sands explores the dark connections between Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet and Nazi war criminal Walther Rauff. He will be in conversation with journalist and CEO of Arte France, **Bruno Patino**, who reflects on his own encounter with Pinochet in his novel *Rire avec le diable*.

Sat 10 May – 17.00

£10, conc. £8, students £5

in English and French



In the Margins

Victor Hugo: Astonishing Drawings

TALK

Victor Hugo was one of France's greatest writers and human rights advocates. In private, his refuge was drawing. Hugo's ink and wash visions of imaginary castles, monsters and seascapes are as poetic as his writing. On the occasion of the exhibition *Astonishing Things: The Drawings of Victor Hugo* held at the Royal Academy of Arts, curator **Sarah Lea**, **G rard Audinet**, Director of the Maisons Victor Hugo (Paris and Guernsey) and **Bradley Stephens**, Professor of French Literature at the University of Bristol will discuss Hugo's imaginary worlds.

Mon 12 May - 19.00

 12, conc.  10, students  5 | in English



Victor Hugo - Octopus (detail), 1866-69, Biblioth que nationale de France, D partement des Manuscrits.

Postcards For Perec

EXHIBITION

In 1978, **Georges Perec** wrote 243 unillustrated postcard messages dedicated to his Oulipo friend **Italo Calvino**. Years later, British book artist and writer **Linda Parr** set up a project for artists around the world to respond to the messages by producing the missing images: actual postcards were sent from twenty-three countries. Postcards will be exhibited at La M diath que during opening hours.

14 May - 25 July

Free



From Page to Screen

Blue Road: The Edna O'Brien Story FILM

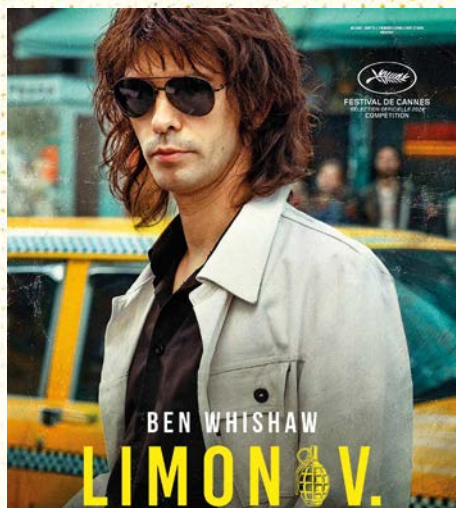
Dir. Sinéad O'Shea, 2024, 99 mins

In 1960, a young Irish woman named Edna O'Brien wrote a sexually frank debut novel, *The Country Girls*. She became a literary sensation, writing for *The New Yorker*, delivering provocative interviews, and authoring screenplays. Her success enraged her writer husband and made her a pariah in her native Ireland, where her books were banned and burned. With readings of her personal journals and accounts by Gabriel Byrne, Walter Mosley and an array of renowned writers, this film is her final testimony.

Mon 5 May - 14.00

Wed 14 May - 20.30

Various prices | in English



Limonov: The Ballad of Eddie FILM

Dir. Kirill Serebrennikov, 2024, 138 mins

Based on the novel *Limonov* by acclaimed French writer Emmanuel Carrère, Serebrennikov's film recounts the controversial journey of the multifaceted Eduard Limonov (Ben Wishaw) through Russia, America and Europe during the second half of the 20th century.

A revolutionary militant, a thug, an underground writer, a switchblade waving poet, a lover of beautiful women, a warmonger, a political agitator, Eduard Limonov blurs the line between facts and fiction and his life story fascinates.

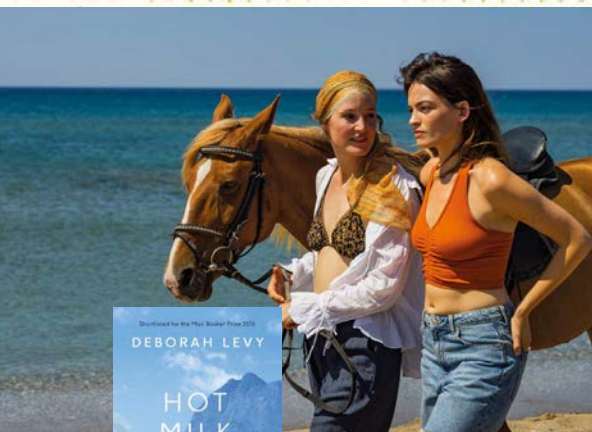
Fri 9 May - 20.15

Sat 10 May - 15.45

Sat 17 May - 13.20

£16, conc. £14, 25 & Under £5 | in English, Russian, French, Spanish with EN subs

From Page to Screen



Hot Milk FILM

Preview, dir. Rebecca Lenkiewicz,
2024, 92 mins

With a strange illness, a mother and her daughter embark on a journey to the Spanish seaside town to find a cure, and along the way the daughter discovers another reality and seeks to emancipate herself from her controlling mother. Rebecca Lenkiewicz's directorial debut is a poetic adaptation of Deborah Levy's Booker Prize-nominated eponymous novel, starring Emma Mackey (*Sex Education*), Fiona Shaw (*Killing Eve*) and Vicky Krieps (*Corsage*).

Sat 10 May – 18.30

£16, conc. £14, 25 & Under £5 | in
English

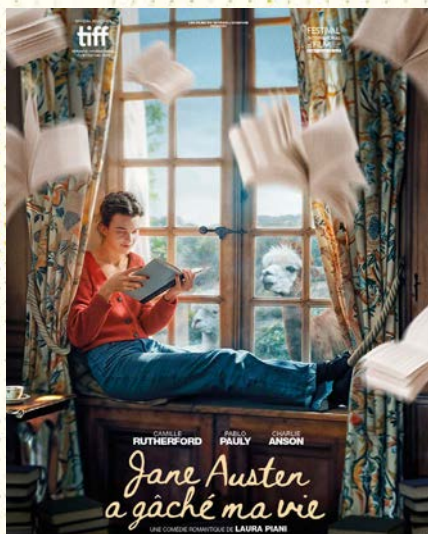
Jane Austen Wrecked my Life FILM

Dir. Laura Piani, 2024, 94 mins

The hopelessly clumsy yet charming and full of contradictions Agathe finds herself in desperate singlehood. Her dream is to experience love akin to a Jane Austen novel and her ultimate aspiration is to become a writer. Instead, she spends her days selling books in the legendary British bookshop, Shakespeare & Co, in Paris. Invited to the Jane Austen Writers' Residency in England, she must confront her insecurities to finally fulfil her ambition of becoming a novelist and put an end to wasting her sentimental life.

Sat 17 May – 18.15

£16, conc. £14, 25 & Under £5
in English and French with EN subs



For Children



Ethel & Ernest

FILM

dir. Roger Mainwood, 2016, 94 mins

Ethel and Ernest is adapted from Raymond Briggs's graphic novel, telling the true story of his parents. They were two ordinary Londoners who fell in love against the background of immense social change in the mid 20th century, experiencing the Depression, World War II, VE Day, post-war austerity and cultural upheaval.

Sat 10 May – 14.00

£5 | in English

Beyond Our Walls

Birmingham

Thu 1 May

19.00 - Talk - Karim Kattan at Voce Books

Bristol

Tue 6 May

19.00 - Talk - Karim Kattan at East Bristol Books

Newcastle upon Tyne

Tue 29 April

19.00 - Talk - The Opt Indie Book Club with Karim Kattan at the French Quarter

London

Fri 9 May

18.30 - Talk - Anne Berest: The Astonishing Life of Gabriële Buffet at Hatchards, Piccadilly

Oxford

Wed 7 May

19.00 - Talk - Karim Kattan & Anbara Salam at Daunt Books Summertown

Book signings

Both English and French editions will be available at our on-site bookseller La Page.

All the authors will be happy to sign after their events.

And further...

Ahead of (and after) the festival, you can find the featured books in our in-house library, La Médiathèque.

www.institut-francais.org.uk/library

Info & booking

www.institut-francais.org.uk/beyond-words

020 7871 3515

Early booking essential

All information is correct at the time of print but liable to change. Please check our website for updates.





Venue

Institut français

17 Queensberry Place, South Kensington
London SW7 2DT

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