

## Beyond Words Festival



8 -22 June 2026, at the Institut français in London

**From 8-22 June, the Institut français presents Beyond Words, a festival celebrating writers from across the French-speaking world whose works are reaching new audiences in English, alongside a curated selection of films inspired by literature.**

Spanning geographies from Beirut to Kamchatka and iconic figures as Klimt and Cantona – the festival journeys through a rich landscape of ideas, moving fluidly between the intimate, the political and the geopolitical.

On 9 June, anthropologist and writer **Nastassja Martin** will discuss *East of Dreams*, drawing on the years she spent living with the Even people in Kamchatka. Displaced after the fall of the Soviet Union, the indigenous family she follows works to reclaim their former self-sufficient way of life in this lyrical work of anthropology and colonial Russian history.

On 20 June, award-winning journalist and novelist **Sorj Chalandon** will join BBC correspondent **Fergal Keane** for a conversation on war and storytelling. Reflecting upon Chalandon's novel *The Fourth Wall*, set amid the Lebanese civil war, and Keane's decades of reporting across global conflicts, they will explore how writers and journalists bear witness to lives transformed by violence. The discussion will be followed by a screening of *The Fourth Wall*, a 2024 adaptation of the eponymous novel, followed by a Q&A with **Sorj Chalandon**.

The festival will shine a light on crime fiction with two special events. Swiss author **Joseph Incardona** will present *Holy F\*ck*, his bold, cinematic novel that moves between satire and thriller on 10 June, while bestselling crime writers **Olivier Norek** (*The Lost and the Damned*, *Turf Wars*, *Breaking Point*) and **Abir Mukherjee** (The Wyndham & Banerjee series) will come together for a conversation on the crime novel as a way of making sense of the world (20 June).

In his newly translated book, French poet and football enthusiast, **Valentin Deudon** revisits **Éric Cantona's 82 Goals**. He will be joined on 13 June by football writer, broadcaster and investigative journalist **Philippe Auclair**, whose acclaimed biographies include *Éric Cantona: The Rebel Who Would Be King*, *Thierry Henry: Lonely at the Top* and most recently *The Mbappé Project: Making a Superstar*.

In conversation with **Ben Faccini**, author of *Other People's Children*, **Camille de Peretti** will discuss her book *Portrait of an Unknown Woman*, the story of a painting by **Gustav Klimt** that was lost, repainted, stolen, and ultimately found intact in a rubbish bag (17 June).

The programme extends to the screen, where stories transcend the page through new adaptations—from Balzac to Camus—as well as films exploring the lives of writers. Highlights include **Sylvain Chomet's** animated biopic of beloved writer and filmmaker **Marcel Pagnol**, two adaptations of **Alexandre Dumas's** masterpieces *The Queen Margot* and *The Three Musketeers* and **Hafsia Herzi's** coming-of-age drama, *The Little Sister*, based on Fatima Daas' auto fictional book *The Last One*.

The Beyond Words Festival has been supported by Florence and Vincent Gombault and by the Friends of the French Institute Trust.

[Beyond Words Full Programme](#)

Info & booking: [www.institut-francais.org.uk](http://www.institut-francais.org.uk)

Venue: Institut français, 17 Queensberry Place, London SW7 2DT

Press contact: Natacha Antolini | [natacha.antolini@institut-francais.org.uk](mailto:natacha.antolini@institut-francais.org.uk)