

BEYOND WORDS

LITERATURE
FESTIVAL

8-22 JUNE 2026

AT THE
FRENCH INSTITUTE
LONDON

TALKS
READINGS
FILMS

INSTITUT
FRANÇAIS
Royaume-Uni



Queen Margot

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 Italy and iconic figures as Klimt and Cantona – the festival journeys through a rich landscape of ideas, moving fluidly between the intimate and the political. Audiences are invited to engage directly with these works through conversations with their authors, offering deeper insight into their contexts and creation.

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 works by François Ozon, Raoul Peck, and Sylvain Chomet.

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

At the Edge of Kamchatka with Nastassja Martin

TALK

Anthropologist and writer **Nastassja Martin** discusses *East of Dreams*, drawing on the years she spent living with the Even people in Kamchatka. Displaced after the fall of the Soviet Union, an indigenous family works to reclaim their former self-sufficient way of life in this lyrical work of anthropology and colonial Russian history. The author examines how humans, animals and spirits can be claimed as interconnected, challenging mainstream Western ideas that view nature as something separate from us. In conversation with her translator **Sophie R. Lewis**, she will reflect on what these encounters reveal about colonial histories and the environmental crises of today.

Tue 9 June – 19.00

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



Sex, Miracles and the Vatican: Joseph Incardona on Holy F*ck



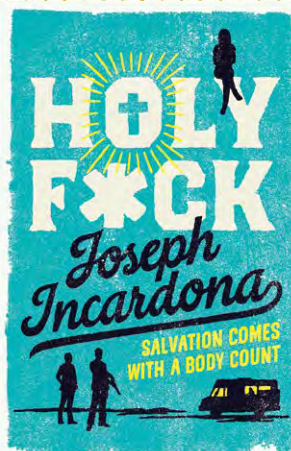
© Chloé Cohen

TALK

Joseph Incardona presents *Holy F*ck*, a darkly comic novel set in the American South. Stella, a young sex worker, discovers she can heal her clients, attracting the attention of the Vatican. What follows is a fast-paced, irreverent story that takes aim at religious authority and moral hypocrisy. A bold, cinematic novel that moves between satire and thriller.

Wed 10 June – 19.00

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



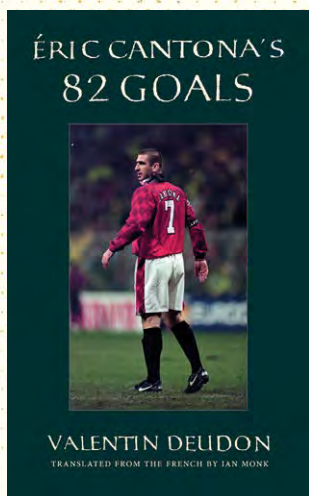
Cantona's 82 Goals as Told by Valentin Deudon

TALK

French poet and football fanatic **Valentin Deudon** revisits **Éric Cantona's 82 Goals**, retracing each goal scored for Manchester United during a defining era for the club. From the goals that carried United to league titles to the ones only he could score, the book captures what made Cantona such a singular presence on the pitch. Valentin Deudon reflects on the player who shaped a generation of fans and left a lasting mark on English football.

Sat 13 June – 14.30

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



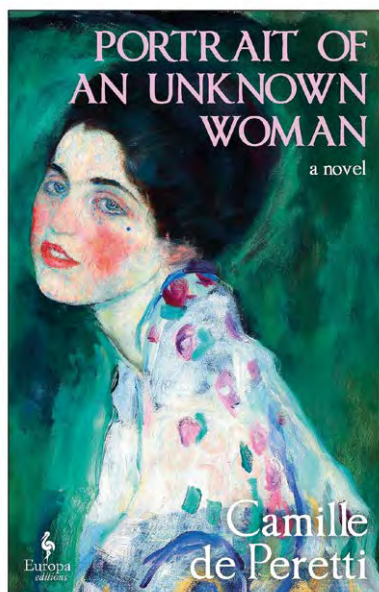
©Franck Potvin

Camille de Peretti in Conversation with Ben Faccini on Gustav Klimt's Portrait of an Unknown Woman

TALK

Camille de Peretti discusses *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. In conversation with **Ben Faccini**, author of *Other People's Children*, she reimagines the life behind the portrait. The book moves across time and place, following the traces of a woman who slipped out of history and into fiction. From the streets of Vienna in 1900 to Texas in the 1980s, and from Manhattan during the Great Depression to contemporary Italy, de Peretti imagines the destiny of this young woman as well as that of her descendants, and creates a masterful fresco that intertwines family secrets, disappearances, and thwarted loves.

Wed 17 June – 19.00
£10, conc. £8, students £5 | in English



Standard

by Nina Bouraoui

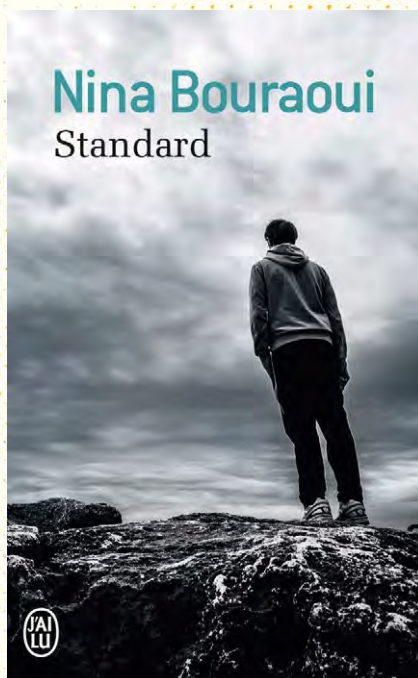
READING GROUP

What happens when an average male, Bruno – underemployed, antisocial, resentful and living in a hostile suburb – suddenly falls desperately in love with a beautiful young woman, named Marlène? Nina Bouraoui's critical satire of contemporary masculinity is a bleak but illuminating read, a valuable corrective to the toxic voices of the 'manosphere.' Through the detailed livelihood of Bruno, Nina Baraoui invites us to a broader reflection on the meaning of our desires. Join the conversation at our reading group in French.

Note that the author will not be present to discuss the novel.

Thu 18 June – 18.15

£7, members £5 | in French



Fault Lines: Olivier Norek in Conversation with Abir Mukherjee

TALK

Bestselling crime writers **Olivier Norek** (*The Lost and the Damned*, *Turf Wars*, *Breaking Point*) and **Abir Mukherjee** (The Wyndham & Banerjee series) come together for a conversation on the crime novel as a way of making sense of the world. From the French banlieues to colonial India, their fiction explores questions of justice and social divides. Drawing on history and lived experience, they also reflect on their recent novels, *The Winter Warriors* and *The Pinnacle*, which mark a shift towards new settings, from the Winter War in Finland to contemporary Mumbai.

Sat 20 June – 14.30

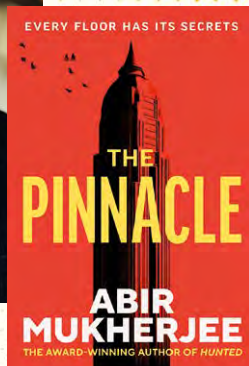
£10, conc. £8, students £5 | in English



©Pauline Darley



©Stuart Simpson



From Lebanon to the Frontlines with Sorj Chalandon & Fergal Keane

TALK

Award-winning journalist and novelist **Sorj Chalandon** joins 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 stories are shaped, what remains unsaid, and how writers and journalists bear witness to lives transformed by violence.

Sat 20 June - 16.30

£10, conc. £8, students £5
in English and French



The Fourth Wall

FILM + TALK

Dir. David Oelhoffen, 2024, 116 mins

Based on the novel by Sorj Chalandon, *The Fourth Wall*, set in Lebanon in the 1980s, plays on the relationship between theatre and political reality. Georges, a politically committed stage director, has given up activism. But when Samuel, his best friend suffering from an incurable disease, urges him to pursue his crazy idea of staging Anouilh's *Antigone* to steal two hours of peace from the Lebanese war, Georges cannot refuse. The play seems to be a glimmer of hope, even if the cloud of a raging war is upon them...

Sat 20 June - 17.30 + Q&A with Sorj Chalandon

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



©JF PAGA

From Page to Screen

Love Me Tender

FILM (Preview screenings)

Dir. Anna Cazenave Cambet, 2025, 134 mins

One late summer, Clémence (Vicky Krieps) tells her ex-husband she now desires women. When he gains custody of their son, her world collapses. Torn between motherhood and freedom as a writer, she begins to redefine herself. Adapted from Constance Debré's acclaimed novel, *Love Me Tender* premiered at Cannes, with Krieps delivering a powerful, searching performance.



Mon 8 June – 20.15

Mon 15 June – 18.00

Various prices | in French with EN subs

Lost Illusions

FILM

Dir. Xavier Giannoli, 2021, 149 mins

Adapted from Honoré de Balzac's masterpiece, *Lost Illusions* charts the life of ambitious romantic poet Lucien de Rubempré (Benjamin Voisin) as he ascends through the hierarchy of 19th century high society. *Lost Illusions* is an epic and visually sumptuous costume drama that chronicles the erosion of romanticism and idealism as Lucien is corrupted by the trappings of success and falls victim to his own hubris. Presented at the Venice Film Festival, the film won 7 César awards in 2022, including Best Film.



Tue 9 June – 15.15

Sun 21 June – 11.10

Various prices | in French with EN subs

Three Musketeers: D'Artagnan

FILM

Dir. Martin Bourboulon, 2023, 121 mins

Allied with the audacious three musketeers Athos, Porthos and Aramis, D'Artagnan faces the dark machinations of the Cardinal of Richelieu. But it is when he falls madly in love with the Queen's confidante, Constance Bonacieux, that D'Artagnan truly puts himself in danger. For it is this passion that leads him into the wake of the one who becomes his mortal enemy: Milady de Winter.



Wed 10 June – 15.45

Sat 13 June – 11:00

Various prices | in French with EN subs

The Little Sister

FILM (Exclusive release)

Dir. Hafsia Herzi, 2025, 106 mins

Hafsia Herzi directs a moving coming-of-age drama where cultural identity and sexuality struggle to reconcile. Seventeen-year-old Fatima, youngest of three daughters, treads carefully between desire, attraction to women, and loyalty to her French-Algerian family as she starts university. Based on Fatima Daas' book, *The Little Sister* won Best Actress (Nadia Melliti) and the Queer Palm at Cannes.



From Wed 10 June

Various prices | in French with EN subs

A Private Life

FILM (Preview screenings)

Dir. Rebecca Zlotowski, 2025, 105 mins

When psychiatrist Lilian Steiner (Jodie Foster) learns of the death of one of her patients, she is deeply troubled. Convinced it was murder, she sets out on an investigation that takes her across France. Rebecca Zlotowski's latest film co-written with French author Anne Berest (*The Postcard*) combines the tension of a thriller with a sharp reflection on the place of psychoanalysis in today's world.



Thu 11 June – 18.20

Sat 20 June – 20.30

Various prices | in French with EN subs

From Page to Screen

A Magnificent Life

FILM (Preview screenings)

Dir. Sylvain Chomet, 2025, 90 mins

With animated film *A Magnificent Life*, Sylvain Chomet (*Belleville Rendez-vous*, *The Illusionist*) delivers a beautiful biopic of Marcel Pagnol. In Paris, Pagnol is commissioned by *ELLE* to write about his childhood in Marseille. As memories resurface, a dialogue emerges between past and present, weaving love and passions through the Belle Époque, rising fascism, and World War II.



Sat 13 June – 14.00

Tue 16 June – 15.30

Sun 21 June – 13.50

Various prices | in French with EN subs

The Story of Adèle H.

FILM

Dir. François Truffaut, 1975, 94 mins

Miss Lewly travels to Halifax in a desperate search for Lieutenant Pinson. In reality, she is Adèle Hugo, second daughter of the exceptional literary and political figure, Victor Hugo, with whom she shares a similar talent for writing. However, the Lieutenant disregards her abundant love and warns her that it is hopeless. As her obsession grows, she will persistently chase and harass him nonetheless... This early film in Isabelle Adjani's career owed her a Best Actress nomination at both the French César and the Oscars.



Sun 14 June – 12.45

Tue 16 June – 15.00

Thu 18 June – 18.00

Various prices | in French, English with EN subs

Orwell: 2+2=5

FILM

Dir. Raoul Peck, 2025, 119 mins

Narrated by Damian Lewis and shaped by an incredible editing of archival footage from around the world, Peck's film lends Orwell's prescient writings a renewed urgency. In this timely and visually compelling essay, Peck calls for a pressing examination of the mechanics of power, propaganda, and systemic violence.



Thu 18 June – 15.30

Mon 22 June – 18.00

*Various prices | in various languages
with EN subs*

The Stranger

FILM

Dir. François Ozon, 2025, 120 mins

François Ozon's striking adaptation of Albert Camus' novel offers a piercing exploration of human absurdity in colonial times and resonates with "the individual's quest for meaning in an increasingly alienating world" as the director puts it. In 1930s Algeria, the apathetic Meursault shows total indifference to life. His emotional detachment leads to a murder, followed by a trial that scrutinises both the crime and his character.



Fri 19 June – 15.00

Sat 20 June – 11.30

Various prices | in French with EN subs

Queen Margot

FILM

Dir. Patrice Chéreau, 1994, 159 mins

In war-torn France, Margot (Isabelle Adjani) is caught between Catholic and Protestant rivalries as her mother, Catherine de Medici, schemes to place her son on the throne. Forced into a loveless marriage yet drawn to another man, Margot faces betrayal and bloodshed. *Queen Margot*, a sumptuous Dumas adaptation, won five Césars, including Best Actress.



Sun 21 June – 14.00

**£11, conc. £9, 25 & Under £5 | in French
& Italian with EN subs**

For Children

Arco

FILM

Dir. Ugo Bienvenu, 2025, 82 mins

In Ugo Bienvenu's colourful time-travel adventure, 10-year-old Arco arrives by mistake in 2075, where technology has gone too far and the environment is at stake. With the help of new friends, he seeks a way home. Produced by Natalie Portman, *Arco* won the Crystal Award at Annecy and the César for Best Music 2026, offering a positive, moving film full of hope.



Sun 14 June – 11.00
£6 | in French with EN subs

Little Amélie

FILM

Dir. Mailys Vallade, Liane-Cho Han, 2025, 77 mins

Nominated for Best Animated Film at the Oscars, BAFTAs and César, *Little Amélie* is a vibrant adaptation of Amélie Nothomb's bestselling memoir *The Character of the Rain* (*Métaphysique des tubes*). Seen through the eyes of a spirited little girl in Japan, the film balances playful curiosity with tender reflections on tradition, family, and belonging.



Sun 21 June – 11.00
£6 | in French with EN subs

Monday 8 June

20.15 – Film – **Love Me Tender**

Tuesday 9 June

15.15 – Film – **Lost Illusions**

19.00 – Talk – **At the Edge of Kamchatka with Nastassja Martin**

Wednesday 10 June

15.45 – Film – **Three Musketeers: D'Artagnan**

18.15 – Film – **The Little Sister**

19.00 – Talk – **Sex, Miracles and the Vatican: Joseph Incardona on Holy F*ck**

Thursday 11 June

18.20 – Film – **A Private Life**

Friday 12 June

20.35 – Film – **The Little Sister**

Saturday 13 June

11.00 – Film – **Three Musketeers: D'Artagnan**

14.00 – Film – **A Magnificent Life**

14.30 – Film – **Cantona's 82 Goals as Told by Valentin Deudon**

18.00 – Film – **The Little Sister**

Sunday 14 June

11.00 – Film – **Arco**

12.45 – Film – **The Story of Adèle H.**

Monday 15 June

18.00 – Film – **Love Me Tender**

Tuesday 16 June

15.00 – Film – **The Story of Adèle H.**

15.30 – Film – **A Magnificent Life**

20.00 – Film – **The Little Sister**

Wednesday 17 June

19.00 – Talk – **Camille de Peretti in Conversation with Ben Faccini on Gustav Klimt's Portrait of an Unknown Woman**

Thursday 18 June

15.30 – Film – **Orwell: 2+2=5**

18.00 – Film – **The Story of Adèle H.**

18.15 – Reading Group – **Standard by Nina Bouraoui**

Friday 19 June

15.00 – Film – **The Stranger**

Saturday 20 June

11.30 – Film – **The Stranger**

14.30 – Talk – **Fault Lines: Olivier Norek in Conversation with Abir Mukherjee**

16.30 – Talk – **From Lebanon to the Frontlines with Sorj Chalandon & Fergal Keane**

17.30 – Film + Talk – **The Fourth Wall + Q&A with Sorj Chalandon**

18.20 – Film – **The Little Sister**

20.30 – Film – **A Private Life**

Sunday 21 June

11.00 – Film – **Little Amélie**

11.10 – Film – **Lost Illusions**

13.50 – Film – **A Magnificent Life**

14.00 – Film – **Queen Margot**

18.30 – Film – **The Little Sister**

Monday 22 June

18.00 – Film – **Orwell: 2+2=5**

18.00 – Film – **The Little Sister**

Book signings

Come and browse through hundreds of books from our on-site bookseller: Both English and French editions will be available. 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, and on our digital library, Culturethèque.

www.institut-français.org.uk/library

www.culturetheque.com

Info & booking

www.institut-français.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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