

Electus Activities

Royal Institution Lecture — Marcus du Sautoy

The Electus programme visited the Royal Institution last Thursday for a talk by the mathematician and sometime Christmas Lecturer Marcus du Sautoy.

Du Sautoy discussed his explorations into the question whether there are things that we cannot know—by which he meant things about the physical universe. He introduced us to a set of different ways in which or knowledge might be limited, or better possible ways of explaining why our knowledge might be limited.

The lecture was especially interesting because it looked at several disparate areas of science, and showed how similar problems of knowledge cropped up in them. At the same time, it was clear to us that du Sautoy was linking this to more fundamental questions about the nature of human life, God, and the role of science in our world.

All in all, then, a stimulating lecture that pushed us to ask ourselves whether if science cannot answer something, then that cannot be answered.

Michael Peat (Head of Science)



Refugees and Migration Lecture—UCL



‘Hospitality and hostility: the role of established refugees in a crisis’.

On 1st November Electus students attended a lunchtime lecture at UCL on the subject of ‘Hospitality and hostility: the role of established refugees in a crisis’. Geographer Elena Fiddian-Qasbiyeh discussed her four-year project on what she calls refugee-refugee humanitarianism.

A level student Ryo Jones describes how the lecture “challenged the stereotypical view of refugees as helpless, while also exposing the lack of help from the authorities in developing infrastructure in an overcrowded camp in Libya. I was astonished to learn how some large refugee camps become mini cities, with people ‘importing’ goods and setting up their own shops, and providing many of the services we expect in any modern community”.



King Lear at the Barbican

On 30th November a group of Electus and English Literature students attended an RSC production of *King Lear* at the Barbican, having enjoyed an introduction to the play by distinguished tutor Peter Cater the previous week. Student Tilly Chandley says that despite not having studied the text, she found the production “entertaining and enlightening, deepening our insight into human behaviour”.



“The production of *King Lear* was intriguing, involving minimal yet beautiful scenery and brilliant acting. Although I personally have not studied English for some time, the group discussions we had before and after the play really opened it up for me and I found myself getting involved in discussions and analysis. Overall the trip was really great for me and I look forward to participating in similar ones in the future.”

-Ben Stoker, A level student

Wellcome Collection Visit

Bedlam: The Asylum and Beyond Exhibition



On 9th December Electus students visited the Wellcome Collection to see ‘*Bedlam: the asylum and beyond*’ - an exhibition exploring the history of Western Europe’s oldest mental institution and our changing attitudes towards mental health. Student Sophie Brownlees describes how the exhibition “enlightened us all as to the living conditions in asylums, and the often shocking treatment of the mentally ill, some of whom were simply suffering from what we would today call anxiety”.

Victoria Miro Gallery

In February a group of Electus, Art and History of Art students visited the Victoria Miro gallery; a leading contemporary art gallery which shows the work of established and emerging artists from the USA, Europe and Asia.

The trip to Victoria Miro allowed students to see contemporary painting at its best. Artists such as Tal R, Peter Doig and Grayson Perry had small works and drawings in the show, which provoked new conversations between students about what they regarded as 'final' works. The theme of the show 'Home' made the images accessible and in places nostalgic, as artists explored the inner and outer realms of their houses. The majority of artists shown are still alive and it was obvious that some students were excited about being able to follow these artists and watch how they develop their styles and ideas.



No Tricks: An Evening with Derren Brown

New College of the Humanities

We were very pleased to receive an invitation from the New College of Humanities to bring a group of students to listen to Derren Brown talk about his new book 'Happy,' as part of Collingham's *Electus* programme. We were intrigued by Derren Brown's departure from his usual style; despite there being no hypnosis or mind tricks, he was fascinating to listen to, as he challenged much of the received wisdom of the current self-help market in his exploration of the pursuit of happiness from the surprisingly modern wisdom of the Stoics and Epicureans in classical times right up until today.



Student Thoughts:

"From observing him in person, I realised he's not as much of an enigma as I thought from watching him on television. I thought he's just as smart as you or I or anyone else, it really just comes down to reading people well."

He's such an interesting man. I'm reading *Happy* at the moment so it was brilliant to hear him expand on it."