

Hanseatic Patronage A Legacy of Art & Architecture

Date/Time	Friday, 5 th December 2025 11.00-16.30	Price	£49 in person £44 post-event recording
Venue	Lettsom House, 11 Chandos Street, London W1G 9EB	Lecturer	Dr Zoë Opačić

This study day is available as both an in person and a recording only event. The recording will be made available to ALL attendees on the Monday following the event and will be available for 4 weeks.

This day will focus on the great but often overlooked trans-European architectural and artistic legacy of the Hansa. What began in the 12th century as an ad-hoc strategic network of a handful of German cities around the Baltic coast gradually evolved to become one of the most powerful confederations of trading partners with shared commercial interests. At its peak between the 13th and the 15th centuries, the Hansa covered a wide geographic network of trading posts, from London and Kings Lynn in the west, via Bergen, Gotland, the German and Polish Baltic coast in the north and as far east as Kievan Rus (and beyond). The Hanseatic cog ships dominated European maritime trade and the league's regular meetings – the Hansatage – in Lübeck were, like modern summits, occasions for trade deals, diplomacy and ceremony. The wealth accumulated by the cosmopolitan Hansa merchants with strong familial bonds was channelled into artistic commissions from some of the greatest artists of the day, such as Bernt Notke, Hans Holbein and Dürer. The sense of civic pride was reflected in a rapid architectural transformation of their cities which were given imposing brick churches, city gates, gabled houses and municipal and ceremonial halls in the most advanced Gothic style. Much less known and understood, the Hansa league was a longer-lasting precursor of the Atlantic and Asian trading routes which ushered in the Dutch Golden Age, as well as the Portuguese and later British naval empires.

1 The Hansa: what, where and who?

2 The Rise of Hanseatic Towns

3 The Hansa Merchants as Patrons of Art

4 Case study: the Vicke Shorler Scroll

Lecturer

Zoë Opačić is a Reader in the History and Theory of Architecture at Birkbeck College, specialising in medieval art, architecture and urbanism. She received her BA, MA and PhD at the Courtauld Institute of Art. A Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, she edited the Journal of British Archaeological Association (2015–18) and has authored and edited a number of publications in English, German, Czech and Italian including recent contributions to the Oxford Handbook of Medieval Central Europe and the Brill Companion to Medieval Vienna.