Immerse yourself in 1920s and 1930s America at this evening event tracing America from the Roaring Twenties through to the end of the Great Depression.

Explore our *America Cool Modernism exhibition, discover the glamour of 1930s Hollywood alongside the American rural farmstead, and be inspired by The Machine Age, The Great Gatsby and the effects of Prohibition.

Tonight’s LiveFriday is the headline event of the Ashmolean’s America Cool Modernism Festival, a month-long series of events celebrating American art, literature, music, drama and film from the 1920s-40s. For this LiveFriday the Ashmolean is working with Blackwell’s Bookshop, Curzon Oxford, the Oxford Playhouse & the Rothermere American Institute. Be greeted by the fabulous The Gatsby Girls, listen to some bite-size talks on America in the 20s and 30s, make a Georgia O’Keeffe collage, Meet a Modernist and find out the password for the Ashmolean Speakeasy “The Blue Ruin” from the “silent” movie actors from Pegasus Theatre.

LEVEL 1

The Gatsby Girls and Guys | SEE | ‘TI’ll say there’s nothing finer than the Charleston’ - Cecil Mait 1923. With authentic steps from the Charleston to the iconic moves from MGM studios, the girls and guys will transport you back with energy and style. The gals will show off their fancy footwork, high kicks and fabulous twists while the boys spin and flip all over town! The Beatroasts | LISTEN | Oxford’s premier postgraduate mixed voice 12-piece vegetable named a cappella group performing two jazz era influenced sets.

A Touch of Paris | LISTEN | A Touch Of Paris specialise in classic American Swing, French Chanson and a little bit of Russian with a French born singer whose impressive vocals cover a four octave range, the band are certain to dazzle you with their unique, expressive style.

Consuelo Vanderbilt – Blenheim Palace’s Dollar Princess by Blenheim Curator Antonia Keane | TALK | In the year which saw Prince Harry marry his American fiancée, it is worth noting that it was once common practice for British aristocrats to take an American bride. The 8th Duke of Marlborough and his brother, Lord Randolph, both wed Americans. It is perhaps fortunate that Randolph’s whirlwind romance and marriage to Jerome, resulted in the birth of the Anglo-American, Winston Churchill. By 1892, the upkeep of Blenheim Palace was costly and the constant lack of funds was a problem; that Randolph’s personal styling showed up to the 1920s and 30s fashions.

Make an Egyptian inspired 20s Headress | ACTIVITY | Have you come to LiveFriday sans-headress? Come and make one in the Empire Galleries with museum volunteers! While cloche hats were worn during the day, headbands, called bandeaus, were seen in the evenings with the most formal dresses. The trend started when King Tut’s tomb was discovered in 1922. Soon after, Americans wanted to look like an Egyptian queen. Join in!

John Lewis 20s Fashion Show | SEE | Fancy seeing a gypsy hair or tap Costume inspired by the 20s look in the modern jazz age, with a special fashion show styled by John Lewis. A personal styling team like “the look”. Buy it at John Lewis Westgate! Historian Dr Helen Saunders will set the scene, with an introduction to the history of the 20s and 30s fashions.

Talking Pictures | ACTIVITY | Pegasus Theatre’s Young Company will pop-up throughout the museum performing avant-garde film and sound pieces from the 1920s. Once in a Lifetime by Moss Hart & George S. Kaufman. The piece will showcase the transition from silent cinema to ‘talkies’ in the earliest stage of motion pictures and explore prohibition-era stories. They will be seen at various locations during the evening, and can even give you clues to the secret speakeasy saloon - The Blue Ruin Bar.

LEVEL 2

The Modernism of Watercolour: American in Homer to Hopper with Timothy Wilcox | TALK | Learn about the emergence of watercolour painting in the early 20th century as a dynamic, modern means of expression. This talk will focus on the work of Winslow Homer, a father-figure in watercolour painting, and how Georgia O’Keeffe, John Marin, and Charles Demuth developed this style.

Tickets: £7/£6 Members & concessions.

Kable String Orchestra Play American Cool | LISTEN | KSO play authentic music including a medley of Dixieland favourites arranged by Kenneth Anderson and a Magnetic Rag by Scott Joplin. This performance by works in the America’s Cool Modernism exhibition. Gabby’s piece reflects on elements of the ‘Roaring Twenties’ through the use of fused jazz sounds as well as capturing the busy industrial scene by means of fast paced hypnotic ‘ neo-modernist’ repetition.

Cool Colourful College | ACTIVITY | Join in with a cool collective colourful collage of a painting from America’s Cool Modernism exhibition. Colour or make your own collage to take away.

Meet a Modernist Writer | ACTIVITY | Have you ever wondered what you’d ask Ernest Hemingway or James Joyce after a few gin cocktails? Even wrong hierarchies you could chat to Buker Keaton about his films or the Fitzgeralds about the jazz age? This is your chance! Scattered throughout the gallery you’ll find iconic writers, painters and actors from the 1920s eagerly waiting to answer your questions. Come along and introduce yourselves – it’s time to meet the modernists!

LEVEL 3

American Cool Modernism: O’Keeffe to Hopper | EXHIBITION | The first exhibition to explore the ‘cool’ in American art in the early 20th century, from early experiments in abstraction by artists like Georgia O’Keeffe, Arthur Dove and Paul Strand to the strict, clean precisionist paintings of Charles Sheeler and Charles Demuth. See incredible loans from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the Terra Foundation for American Art, Chicago, including 35 paintings that have never been seen in the UK before. Third floor exhibition is joined by incredible loans from Ashmolean Musuem or for those who have bought a LiveFriday + Exhibition Combo ticket. Entrance via Gallery 58, tickets available at shop on level 3.

John Lewis 20s Fashion Show Edit | TALK | Meet Audrey the owner of The Retro Room in St Clements Street, bringing with her some vintage pieces for you to try on and buy dresses, hats, jewellery and more! Audrey has owned shops in Glasgow, and directed actors on stage and screen, so she knows her Vintage.

The Rothermere American Institute Talks | TALKS |

Great Gatsby Read-a-thon with Blackwell’s Bookshop | ACTIVITY | Join Blackwell’s Bookshop as they attempt to read an entire book “The Great Gatsby” in 3½ hours. Come and cheer them on, read a bit yourself and find out more about the America’s Cool Modernism Book display.

LEVEL 4

Decadent Times Lounge & #00sTop Restaurant | JAZZ, COCKTAILS AND GAMES | Come to the cool jazz tunes of Iza and his trio, chill out with a Prohibition friendly cocktail and play some authentic 20s games with DJ

Thank you to our festival partners: Blackwell’s Bookshop, Curzon Oxford, The Rothermere American Institute & Oxford Playhouse