

ART HISTORY 2 : 2015-2024

2015

Art History 2 started on 3 February 2015 and we have had a very busy first year. We have a very wide range of interests, but after looking initially at Stone age art, Cave paintings and the Elgin marbles, we found a common interest in **Impressionism** and began researching and presenting artists to tie in with the National Gallery exhibition 'Inventing Impressionism' which ran from 4 March to 31 May 2015 and which a number of us visited and enjoyed. In addition to some French Impressionists who featured in the exhibition, *Boudin, Degas, Monet, Manet, Morisot, Renoir, Sisley* we researched and presented the work of some of the most famous American Impressionists, *Mary Cassatt Wm Merritt Chase* and *Theodore Robinson* and we showed our work, mostly in the form of Powerpoint presentations, at the Summer Open Day.

Some of us also reported on visits to museums (the Ashmolean, Oxford, the Musée d'Orsay, Paris, the Musée Marmottan, Paris) and those of us who were around in August had a very enjoyable group visit to the 'Sickert in Dieppe' exhibition at Pallant House.



In the autumn, a new member, newly-retired, gave us a very interesting illustrated talk on her career as a museum curator - which had some very exciting moments over the years! Having enjoyed the BBC's *Fake or Fortune* series, we also watched a very interesting follow-up documentary about the family of forgers featured in one of the programmes.

In October, having noticed that a number of London galleries were showing autumn exhibitions of portraits by various artists, we decided to focus our research on portraits by a wide range of artists across the centuries. We began by watching two recordings of portrait painters at work, one classically trained, the other self-taught, which led to a lively discussion of the merits of each painter and their approaches to portrait painting. Two of us attended the U3A Study Day on Portraiture at the National Gallery towards the end of November and fed back to the group in the New Year.

2016

We moved to our new, very comfortable, home at Denmead Community Centre in February and settled down to work. We spent the first half of this year studying **Portraits** painted by *Rembrandt, Hogarth, Gainsborough, Romney, Vigée Le Brun, Ingres, Millais, Repin, Picasso* and *Hockney* and we ended our study of portraits in June with a look at how three artists represented British monarchs and their families: *Holbein* and Henry VIII; *Van Dyck* and Charles II; and *Winterhalter* and Victoria.

In July, we went to Portsmouth City Museum (<http://www.portsmouthcitymuseums.co.uk/>) where we had an excellent introduction to the exhibition of paintings by *Edward King* (1862-1951) from its

curator, Susan Ward. Following our visit to the exhibition, we were given a guided tour of the upper floors of the museum by our member, Ros Hardiman, who retired last year as Head of Collections for Portsmouth, so we not only enjoyed our visit, but learned a great deal more than we might have done had we been unaccompanied. If anyone is thinking of going to the museum, we would strongly recommend it – and we can also recommend the little museum café where we had lunch beforehand.



Having studied the life and work of J.E. Millais during the spring, we watched the film 'Effie Gray' in August.

In the autumn we looked at some more favourite museums and art galleries: Manchester Art Gallery. Portsmouth museums, the Wallace Collection and Canadian art in the Musée des Beaux Arts in Montreal. In December we had a Christmas lunch and a quiz.

2017

Our topic for our main programme of 2017 was **Art Nouveau and Art Deco**. We began with a comprehensive introduction to Art Nouveau, looking at its origins in Britain with the Art and Crafts movement and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and how it developed in Europe and across the world in terms of architecture, graphic design, fine arts, decorative arts and retail. Members then chose aspects of Art Nouveau which they wished to research and present in more detail: the work of *Charles Rennie Mackintosh; Gustav Klimt; Art Nouveau posters; Arthur Liberty; and Art Nouveau architecture in Barcelona*. In May, we moved on to study Art Deco with presentations on *Charles Holden and London Underground Stations, Eugene Savage, Eltham Palace* and, finally, *Three Art Deco Buildings in New York City*.

At the end of our main six-month study block, we decided to base our shorter autumn study block on **Artists of West Cornwall** - the artists' colonies which had settled in Newlyn and Lamorna in West Cornwall from the mid-19th century. This is why for our Film Month we watched the film 'Summer in February' which was loosely based on a true story set in the colony at Lamorna, near Newlyn.

Between September and November we researched and presented the work of the following artists who lived and worked in Newlyn and Lamorna: *Stanhope Forbes*, who was known as the 'Father of the Newlyn School'; *Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes; Walter Langley; Percy Craft; Norman Garstin; Dod and Ernest Procter; and Harold and Dame Laura Knight*.

Our December meeting again took the form of a Christmas lunch and a quiz on the year's work.



2018

Our main study programme for 2018 was **The Golden Age of Dutch Art** which began with a viewing of some very useful background information on a BBC DVD. Following this, we had presentations on the following artists *Frans Hals* (1582-1666); *Willem Claeszoon Heda* (1594-1682); *Pieter de Hooch* (1629-1684); *Gerrit Dou* (1613-1675) and *Jan Steen* (1626-1679). Then came *Nicolaes Maes* (1634-1693), *Frans van Mieris the Elder* (1635-1681) and the only female artist studied: *Judith Leyster* (1609-1660) Next came Carel Fabritius (1652 -1684), whose life was cut short by an explosion in Delft. The study programme ended in July by looking at the landscapes of *Jacob van Ruisdael* (1629-1681) and the paintings of *Johannes Vermeer* (1632-1675).

The film chosen for Film Month was, appropriately 'Girl with a Pearl Earring' (2003).

In March, we received an educational grant to visit the Royal Academy where we saw the wonderful exhibition, *Charles I: King and Collector*, which reunited 150 works of art from the king's extensive collection - amongst them many wonderful Dutch and Flemish masterpieces - sold off by Cromwell after Charles' execution in 1649 and never brought together again under one roof until this once-in-a-lifetime exhibition. More than eighty of the works in the exhibition were loaned by the Queen, but others are today owned by major galleries around the world and by private collectors, so it was thrilling to see them all at the Royal Academy.

Some of us went on after the RA exhibition to The Queen's Gallery to see the *Charles II: Art and Power* exhibition, in which other works from Charles I's collection were on display. These had been reclaimed by Charles II after the Restoration and he also added to the collection. Today these works are amongst the current Royal Collection of HM the Queen. (No photographs this year!)

We chose **American Artists in the 19th Century** for our 2018 autumn study programme, looking at the work of six artists: George Catlin (1796-1872), Albert Bierstadt (1830 – 1902), Thomas Cole (1801 -1848), Winslow Homer (1836-1910), Thomas Eakins (1844-1916) and Thomas Sully (1783 -1872).

We ended the year with our usual Christmas Lunch and Quiz in December.

2019

Our fifth year! In January we had two presentations postponed from 2018, due to illness, so we began our main study programme on **British Artists of the Twentieth Century** in February with a presentation on *Eric Kennington* (1888 - 1960), *John Minton* (1917-1957), *Patrick Heron* (1920-1999), *Stanley Spencer* (1891-1959), *L.S. Lowry* (1887-1976) *Edward Bawden* (1903-1989), *John Lavery* (1856–1941), *Banksy* (1974 -), *Andy Goldsworthy* (1956 -), *Arthur Rackham* (1867-1939) and *Graham Sutherland* (1903 – 1980).

Our autumn study programme was on **Women Artists** and we began by watching a BBC documentary on 'The Story of Women in Art', which went from the Italian Renaissance to the Golden Age of Dutch Art. We have already studied some women artists during the course of other study programmes: *Judith Leyster* (1609-1660); *Elizabeth Vigée Le Brun* (1755 – 1842); four female Impressionists; and three Newlyn women artists, so we were keen to investigate further (and we may return to this study area again in the future). The women artists we studied in 2019 were: *Angelica Kauffman* (1741-1807), *Mary Cassatt* (1844-1926), *Cecilia Beaux* (1855-1942), *Frida Kahlo* (1907-1954) and *Louise Bourgeois* (1911-2010).

Instead of our usual Christmas meeting, we ended the year by going to see the exhibition **Portsmouth Revisited** at the Portsmouth City Museum where we had a private viewing and a talk by the curator, Susan Ward (r) which we all enjoyed very much indeed. Here are some photographs taken on the day.



2020

During this strange year, thanks to the Covid-19 pandemic, we met together at the community centre only in January and February, with two national lockdowns - plus strict rules on meetings between them - preventing all of us from gathering together again. However, we continued with both of our study programmes through the year with presentations circulated via email on the days when we would normally meet each month; and we also had zoom meetings on those days which took the place of our coffee breaks between presentations when we could chat generally about anything at all.

We had decided to study **Italian Renaissance artists (c1300-1600)** for our main study programme, followed by **Painting the Sea: Marine Art and Seascapes** during our autumn study programme. During Film month in August, members had a choice of two online videos to watch, the first, on the Medici family, linked with the main study programme; the second on marine art linked with the autumn study programme.

We began our main study programmes with a presentation on *The Decorative Art of the Renaissance* which distinguished decorative art from the fine arts on which the rest of our presentations would focus, each considering the work of a single artist, and to illustrate how the most successful Renaissance artists were able to work across different media to carry out commissions from their patrons. We looked at a very wide range of decorative art from a variety of categories.

The artists we studied were: *Lorenzo Ghiberti* (1378-1455), *Fra Filippo Lippi* (ca. 1406-1469), *Giovanni Bellini* (1430-1516), *Sandro Botticelli* (1445-1510), *Leonardo Da Vinci* (1452-1519), *Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni* (1475 – 1564), *Lorenzo Lotto* (1480 – 1556/57), *Raffaello Sanzio, aka Raphael* (1483 – 1520), *Antonio Allegri da Correggio* (1489 –1534), *Jacopo Tintoretto* (1518 – 1594) and *Giovanni Battista Moroni* (c1521 – 1578).

During our autumn programme, the artists we studied were: *Caspar David Friedrich* (1774 – 1840), *J.W.M. Turner* (1775 – 1851), *Impressionists by the Sea* (1850 – 1900), *W.L. Wyllie* (1851 – 1931) *Robert Borlase Smart* (1881 – 1947) and *Robert Wyland* (1956-)

Our usual Christmas 2020 meeting did not happen, of course. Instead, we met on zoom, but we hope to be able to have our usual Christmas meeting in 2021.

2021

In 2021, we chose **Art in Victorian Britain (1837-1901)** as our main study programme, followed by **Urban Life and Cityscapes** in the autumn. Most of our meetings happened over zoom again this year, with presentations emailed around each month, apart from September, October and November when the bravest of us gathered and enjoyed being together, albeit socially distanced.

The artists which members chose to present as part of the main study programme were: *David Roberts* (1793-1864); *Edwin Landseer* (1802-1873); *Richard Dadd* (1817-1886); *George Frederick Watts* (1817-1904); *Patrick Branwell Bronte* (1817-1848); *William Powell Frith* (1819-1909); *Eleanor Vere Boyle* (1825-1916); *Marianne North* (1830-1890); *Frank Holl* (1845-1888); and *Phoebe Traquair* (1852-1936).

The artists studied during the autumn programme were: *William Hogarth* (1697-1764); *Giovanni Antonio Canal, aka Canaletto* (1697-1768); *John Atkinson Grimshaw* (1836-1893); *Edward Hopper* (1882-1967); *Norman Cornish* (1919- 2014); *Frank Sidney Smith* (1928-); *William Thomas Kincade* (1958 -2012); *Thomas Radclyffe* (b1989 -)

Covid cases were high at the end of the year so our Christmas meeting did not take place again. We are all hoping that December 2022 will see a return to normal in this respect.

2022

For the third year, we were unable to meet in person in January and February, with meetings by zoom and presentations circulated by email, but meetings happily resumed for half of us in March, although the meetings in May and August had to be cancelled due to illness and inability to attend for a variety of reasons. We chose **Baroque Art** as our main study programme and the artists featured were: *Brueghel the Elder* (1568–1625); *Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio* (1571-1610); *Artemisia Gentileschi* (1593-1652/3); *Nicolas Poussin* (1594-1665); *Rodríguez de Silva y Velázquez* (1599-1660); *Anthony van Dyck* (1599-1641); *Philippe de Champaigne* (1602-1674); *Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione* (1609-1664); *David Teniers* (1610-1690); *Charles Le Brun* (1619- 1690); and *James Thornhill* (1675- 1734).

Our autumn programme was on **Illustrators of Children's Books** and we looked at the work of *Richard Doyle* (1824-1883); (*Beatrix Potter* (1866-1943); *Edward Ardizzone* (1900-1979); *Maurice Sendak* (1928-2012); *Judith Kerr* (1923-2019); and *Raymond Briggs* (1934-2022).

Once again, we did not meet in December.

2023

2023 started for Art History 2 in February when most of us gathered to have a New Year's Lunch at the Community Centre, which we enjoyed very much (See photos of members enjoying various desserts below).



Joan and Pam



Carol and Cathy



Kate and Ros



Ros and Liz



After lunch, Ros gave a fascinating and informative talk on the City of Portsmouth's extensive collection of silver, entitled '*Silver Reflections: a Personal View of Portsmouth's Silver Collection*', which made members who had not already visited the exhibition with this title at the City Museum in Portsmouth keen to go at the earliest opportunity.

Our main programme for 2023 looked at **Realism (1848-1900)** and began in March with presentations on *Jean-François Millet* (1814–1875) and *Gustave Courbet* (1819–1877). We also studied *Jules Breton* (1827–1906), *Adolf Menzel* (1815-1905), *Hubert von Herkomer* (1849-1914), *Vladimir Makovsky* (1846-1920), *Jozef Israels* (1824-1911) and *Anton Mauve* (1838-1888).

In September, instead of our monthly meeting, five of us visited Pallant House in Chichester to see the Gwen John exhibition. It was a very hot day and we were glad to have refreshments in the museum garden afterwards before the journey home. (L-R: Ros, Penny, Pam and Cathy)



Our autumn programme was on **Scottish Artists**. Artists studied were: *Sir Henry Raeburn* (1756-1823), *Joseph Henderson* (1832-1908), *William MacTaggart* (1835-1910), *Sir Robert Stodart Lorimer* (1864-1929), *Joan Eardley* (1921-1963) and *John Bellany* (1942-2013). We didn't have our Christmas lunch in December as a number of members were unable to come so decided to have our non-alcoholic fizz to toast the New Year in January instead.

2024

Our main programme for 2024 is **Russian Art** and we began in January by watching two very interesting BBC documentaries on *The Art of Russia*. In February, we had presentations on *Andrei Rublev* (1360-1430) and *the Art of the Icon* followed by *Ivan Nikolaevich Kramskoy* (1837-1887) who was the leader of the Peredvizhniki. In March we learned about *Ivan Konstantinovich Aivazovsky* (1817-1900) and *Ivan Ivanovich Shishkin* (1832-1898).