

THE NEWSLETTER

Issue No.5 – May/June 2004

Trudy's Chairwords

The 13th ADFAS season ended with Sarah Searight's excellent talk on *Ceramics of the Islamic World* and a guided visit to the KMSKA to see an exhibition of 16th Century Flemish Landscape paintings. In May ADFAS was represented at the NADFAS AGM in Eastbourne by committee member Maureen Smith, accompanied by husband Michael (member). We look forward to Maureen's report at the next committee meeting.

Discounting the unusually large number of visitors at the Osterrieth Huis in March, attendance at lectures this season has averaged 32 members and guests. Our small membership (42) suits the facilities offered at the Rubenshof and next season the committee plans a pre-lecture supper at the venue, to give members an opportunity to enjoy the menu also.

The 2004/5 Lecture Programme, starting Monday 4 October, is confirmed and we hope it will prove an exciting series of talks on very diverse subjects. We have been able to engage the Chief Conservator of Paintings at The Mauritshuis in The Hague, Jørgen Wadum, to speak about the conservation of Vermeer's paintings, In particular his work on the cleaning and conservation of *The Girl with the Pearl Earring*, amongst many other famous works. We explore artists' use of paint in the *Red Vibrations* lecture, links with music and art in the cities of Venice and Pompeii, how silver is made, *Velasquez, The Displaced Art of World War II ...* and more. So many interesting subjects, so much to learn!

ADFAS survives on your continuing interest and support. We look forward to seeing you all again at the Rubenshof in October. Until then, have a happy, healthy and, hopefully, sunny summer!

Trudy Debrice

The ADFAS Heritage Volunteers' Project: The St. Andrew reliquary ship of Amalfi

Five members and two associated members are cleaning the reliquary ship in Sint Andries Church under the guidance of restorer Evelien van Biezen. The ship has been dismantled as far as possible in order to be able to clean it thoroughly, the difficulty being to remove an old varnish layer.

It is planned to put the cleaned reliquary ship together with other artefacts into a glass show case (which has yet to be built) in a nice new museum next to the church. It is in that lovely new, warm space that the volunteers are working on Wednesday and Thursday mornings. In this way they don't have to endure the low temperatures in the church!

On 6 June 2004 Sint Andries Church celebrated its 475th Jubilee. It was too bad that the restoration of the ship wasn't finished, but during the festivities (to which all the volunteers were invited) the reliquary ship was put on display, with the necessary information about ADFAS, NADFAS and the Heritage Volunteers. During the reception Liliane and Gilberte were even able to provide a commentary for interested visitors.

We plan to finish the work by the end of the summer.

GDB

A Walk down the Meir 24 April 2004

With only eight ADFAS members and our guide, Key Minnebo, this has been one of the most interesting city-walks ever. I have walked a thousand times along this shopping street and never did I stop to take a in depth look at the facades above the shops.

We started at the statue of Teniers, founder of the Antwerp Academy, the

third Academy of the Western World after Rome and Florence!

On to the Leysstraat: had you ever noticed the house with the inscription: *'t Visschers Huizeken* with a ship's bow and putties holding fishes? or the house with the heads of the city magistrates (19th C.)? Did you know all the houses in the Leysstraat were built by the city? Where the Meir crosses the Jezusstraat is Van Dijk's statue. It has travelled far: from the Academy to the Roosevelt-plaats, the middle of the Meir and now here. Did you know that during the French occupation, the Jezusstraat was renamed *rue de l'imposteur*?

Next, the Meir. At the corner used to be the "Tiets" shop, after which the straw hats *à la Maurice Chevalier* are named. The statue of "Electricia" sits on top of the first shop to sell electric utensils. Where the City Festival Hall was built once stood a most luxurious house called *De Kleine Koning*, belonging to a Portuguese trader in luxury goods. Mary Medici once slept here! Did you know that the organ in the Volkskunde Museum used to stand in the Festival Hall? Today plans are being made for a shopping gallery within the Festival Hall connecting the Meir to the Kipdorpevest. On the other side of the Meir are some 1930's Modernistic houses, and the Osterrieth house designed by the architect Van Beuscheid; it first belonged to the Van Susteren family who also owned the Royal Palace where Napoleon once spent a night. We learned much, much more as our walk continued as far as the *Boerentoren*.

This guided walk is a must for all who live in Antwerp and even more for those who hate the city centre and think the Meir is an ugly, often dirty shopping street, without any interest.

Thank you so much Maureen for organising this walk and for giving me the opportunity to learn more about my city!

GDB

Comments on lectures and visits by ADFAS members

Please send us your comments and we will publish them. Thank you.

Elaine Grogan on The Sketches of Charles Rennie Mackintosh (April 2004)

Elaine Grogan first gave a brief survey of the artist's life, putting his work in a general art history context. She then came to her subject, on which she has written a book; she talked with passion and scientific knowledge.

Only recently the National Library of Ireland has identified three sketchbooks in its collection as drawings by C.R. Mackintosh. These sketches date from the crucial period in his youthful development, spanning his highly successful student years and the beginnings of his professional career. Each of the three sketchbooks covers an area central to his growth as an artist: the architecture of his native Scotland; an important scholarship journey in Italy; and Mackintosh's first love and greatest influence, the study of plants and growing things.

To the Victorian architect, the sketchbook was an indispensable aid to both education and practise. They are private jottings (as Mackintosh called them), records of ideas and motifs for future use. Mrs Grogan first showed us the sketches of architectural details of Scottish and English buildings such as the castle with its chapel at Stirling, near Edinburgh. From the botanical sketchbook we were shown sketches which demonstrated his empirical naturalism and on the other hand the pattern-seeking ideal of the designer. The lecture ended with Mackintosh's journey to Italy, again architectural sketches from towers, window arches, tombs, etc. On his way home from Italy, Mackintosh stopped in Antwerp and it was an intense pleasure to see a few sketches with details of "Het Steen" and details from paintings which are in our KMSKA. What I appreciated very much during this lecture was to see the sketches, immediately followed by a picture of the actual building details.

It was a most interesting evening with an unexpected approach to a well known artist. Thank you Mrs Grogan!

GDB

Sarah Searight on Ceramics of the Islamic World (May 2004)

So much daily news about the Arab world, but it is all about politics or religion and sadly enough not about Islamic Art! Mrs Searight's lecture was a wonderful journey through time (from the 9th to 18th century) and through the different techniques of ceramic making. Her lecture covered ceramics with floral decorations from pre-Islamic art, ceramics depicting persons in a secular context as well as ceramics with bands of calligraphic quotations from the Koran. We travelled from Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq) through Iran to the Caspian area, back to Istanbul and the Mediterranean countries of Egypt and Syria (with some Greek influence) and then again further away to the turquoise mosques and minarets of Samarkand and Bukhara, along the Silk Road. Mrs Searight not only showed us ceramic plates and vessels in white and blue, but also lusterware with gold, silver and copper decorations and many marvellous tiles (both large and small) which cover the walls, roofs, minarets and the mihrabs (the little niche that identifies the wall facing Mecca) of different mosques. Some of her slides showed objects that can be seen in London's Victoria & Albert Museum where she lectures regularly. Mrs Searight is so well-informed on Islamic art, we could not have wished for a better lecturer to guide us through the subject.

GDB

Rubens as Collector The Rubenshuis – 20 March 2004

Our guide for this exhibit was Ann Van Houtte. As the museum was very busy with many people, Ann brought us into the new age of technology by supplying us with earphones and receivers so we could all hear her no matter where we stood in the room. The first part of our tour went very well but unfortunately her microphone stopped working half way through, so it was back to trying to stand close to her as she explained the paintings.

Most of us who live in Antwerp know a great deal about its most famous citizen, Peter Paul Rubens. He was a well educated man, had studied in Italy, spoke several languages and had been an ambassador travelling to various countries. He was also an avid collector, collecting only what interested him. Rubens's private gallery grew into one of the largest and finest in Antwerp. As well as art, Rubens also had a vast library of many books, a few of which he had put together and illustrated himself.

The present exhibition of paintings and works of art at the Rubenshuis, is taken from an inventory list of Rubens's collection made at the time of his death. The list was made for the Duke of Buckingham, who over the years had purchased many of Rubens's paintings, antiques and sculptures, and was interested in buying the whole collection. Philip IV of Spain had also been interested and bought three items. On display is a copy of the list, in English, on which '+'s had been made by Charles I, indicating what he had wanted (but did not obtain).

Rubens collected paintings of still life, portraits, and scenes of people in everyday life. The collection includes works by Anthony Van Dyck (but only before 1620), Jacob Jordaens, Pieter Brueghel, Quentin Massys, Tintoretto and Titian to name but a few. His collection was constantly changing as he sold and bought paintings. Rubens was an admirer of Titian and was influenced by his work. At one time Rubens owned eleven paintings by Titian, and had copied 34 of his original works. In fact there were many copies of famous portraits and statues that Rubens had done on his travels, and he used them as models in many of his own paintings. He also bought works by other artists and then reworked them by adding a few extra details or making small changes.

In this collection was an outstanding ivory and ebony crucifix with Christ in a vertical 'Y' position. This carving was created by Georg Petel from a design by Rubens. There were also some Roman items from the 1st century including three

beautiful cameos, a funeral urn, and a bust of Seneca. To display his Roman antiquities, Rubens built onto his house a round room with a hole in the ceiling to let light in. This room was modeled after the Pantheon in ancient Rome.

This was an excellent exhibition and thanks to Ann we had an insight into another part of Rubens life.

Janna McCarthy

*The Invention of Landscape in
Western Painting – Patinir to Rubens
15 May 2004*

Eastern art, we know, can be very much landscape and we are, nowadays, so used to seeing, in Western art, dominant landscapes that we forget that this was not always so. The last visit of our 2003/2004 season took us to KMSKA where, under the expert guidance of Annamaria Olbrechts, we had an overview of the change in the role of landscape from background to subject matter in works ranging from Patinir, a pioneer of the genre, to Rubens, a master of the genre as it had evolved by his time.

The development of landscape as an independent genre was centered in Antwerp from 1500 onwards and is reflected in a masterly exhibition of 80 paintings and 24 drawings & engravings from the period 1520 to 1650. Why particularly Antwerp, even in that important period, as opposed to Italy? Annamaria suggested two reasons: As a reaction to the very crowded cities of the Low Countries and the sheer talent of its virtuoso painters.

This was also a period when interest generally in one's own environment was growing, a time of great explorations, a time when painters traveled to study and sketch nature and the outside world. In their landscapes they visualized aspects of the contemporary view of the world and its meaning. Thus these landscapes are more than just "beautiful paintings". To demonstrate this, the exhibition was grouped under seven themes.

INVENTING THE LANDSCAPE. "The whole world depicted on a small painting" Johannes Cuspinianus, 1473-1529, Hungarian diplomat & scholar. From 1500 a realistic portrayal of landscape began to be a goal in

itself, not just an adjunct to an often religious story, often using a classical theme. Patinir was a pioneer of the so-called "world landscape", imaginary but realistically depicted scenes that show bird's eye panoramas inviting the eye to wander through rocks, forests, meadows, roads and rivers.

NATURE AS ENEMY. "The Northerners have a special talent for the landscape; their untamed fatherland offers the most suitable themes" Paolo Pino, painter active in Venice in the mid 1500's. Nature is also seen as a threat. The Fall of Man disrupted the quiet of paradise and ever since man has been a plaything of nature's forces. Wind, rain, storm and fire rage. In the wild, man is vulnerable.

THE RHYTHM OF NATURE. August: "This is your domain, godly Ceres. Where we sow you bring prosperity. See, you make the yellow heads of grain bow." Peter Breughel the Elder was the first to paint monumental vistas devoted to the months and seasons. Nature itself has the lead role. The yearly cycle of nature is depicted in panoramic vistas within which man is working or enjoying the pleasures of the open air.

DRAWINGS AND ENGRAVINGS. "On his travels he (Peter Breughel the Elder) painted many scenes true to nature, which made people say that he had swallowed all the mountains and rocks during a stay in the Alps, so that he could spit them out on canvases when he returned home. This is how realistically he could follow nature." Karel Van Mander, 1548-1606, Dutch writer & painter. Until as late as the 19th century most painters only sketched out of doors. Painting was for the studio, helped by these study sketches. Beautiful studies of trees, plants, rivers and forests have been preserved. Many were developed into works of art independent of the painting they supported.

PARADISE. "God's grace can be seen from every dune top." Constantijn Huygens, 1596-1687, Dutch & European polymath. Tranquil nature, in which man and animal live peacefully together is recalled in numerous depictions of paradise. Pastoral life is glorified, and idealized, in landscapes with shepherd and shepherdess living a simple and peaceful life in the surrounds of nature beautiful.

LANDSCAPE AS A DOCUMENT. "The measurement of earth, seas and stars has become intelligible because of painting, and can thus be observed by many." Albrecht Dürer, 1471-1528, painter & engraver and a jewel of the Northern Renaissance. From 1550 on the imagined "world landscape" evolved into a more realistic depictions. Trees, forests, rocks and harbours became more and more true to nature.

MIRROR OF VITALITY. "The sight of a beautiful landscape fills the observer with vitality that in itself fills the whole world." Marsilio Ficino, 1433-1499, a central figure of the Florentine Platonic/Pythagorean Academy. Two differing styles are recognized: That of Jan Sibrechts, a somewhat separate figure in Flemish landscape painting who was closer to the static Dutch genre unlike the other masters who were of the dynamic movement very much exemplified by Rubens. We must not forget that Rubens painted landscapes throughout his life, developing a vision that inspired others to paint likewise.

This article draws extensively from the excellent, small and very reasonably priced (€1.00) English language brochure produced by KMSKA for this exhibition. An initiative of KMSKA that is to be encouraged for their future exhibitions and those of like organisations.

Michael & Maureen Smith



The Judgement of Paris (c.1636), by Peter Paul Rubens, in the collection of the National Gallery, London

Rubens is considered responsible for redirecting the path of northern European painting by combining classical Italian themes with realistic traditional Flemish painting. This piece was created near the end of his life when his paintings reflected a mastery of technical skill and detail.

DATES TO REMEMBER

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|-----------------|---|-----------------------|---------|
| 21 August 2004 | ADFAS Committee Meeting (if you have anything you would like brought up at the Committee meeting, please get in touch with Trudy Debice or Gilberte Du Bois) | | |
| 4 October 2004 | AGM, followed by ADFAS Lecture <i>Venice and Her Music</i> Lecturer: Janet Canetty-Clark | Rubenshof, 1st floor | 7.30 pm |
| 8 November 2004 | The Antwerp Hilton Lecture <i>The Girl with the Pearl Earring: Vermeer's mid-career masterpiece seen in the context of technique & restoration</i> Lecturer: Jørgen Wadum, Chief Conservator, The Royal Cabinet of Paintings, The Hague | Hilton Hotel, Antwerp | 7.30 pm |
| 6 December 2004 | ADFAS lecture <i>Angels, Cherubs & the Hosts of Heaven</i> Lecturer: Frances Feldman | Rubenshof, 1st floor | 7.30 pm |
| 10 January 2005 | ADFAS Lecture <i>Red Vibrations</i> Lecturer: Alexandra Drysdale | Rubenshof, 1st floor | 7.30 pm |
| 7 February 2005 | ADFAS Lecture <i>How is it Made? A Closer Look at Silver</i> Lecturer: Dr Helen Clifford | Rubenshof, 1st floor | 7.30 pm |
| 7 March 2005 | ADFAS Lecture <i>Spoils of War – The Displaced Art of WWII</i> Lecturer: Rev. Donald Easton | Rubenshof, 1st floor | 7.30 pm |
| 4 April 2005 | ADFAS Lecture <i>Cities of Vesuvius: Art & Everyday Life in Ancient Pompeii & Vesuvius</i> Lecturer: Dr Neil Faulkner | Rubenshof, 1st floor | 7.30 pm |

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