

THE NEWSLETTER

Issue No.2 – November/December 2005

Trudy's Chairwords

With two well-attended lectures under our belt already (39 and 35 members and guests in October and November respectively) and, happily, positive feedback on both, the ADFAS season is off to a good start. Two additional members to the committee, Georgina Murphy and Helen Vinckier, have enabled us to shuffle some of our roles within the task list and we hope, as always, to provide an interesting and varied programme of events through the winter and spring months, culminating in the ADFAS Art Exhibition in June 2006 and a special end of season outing.

Some months ago, on behalf of ADFAS, I applied to NADFAS for help in funding the proposed 4th ADFAS Contemporary Art Exhibition. This event, with its support of local student and professional artists, together with the work of the ADFAS Heritage Volunteers, results in real involvement of our Society, in a significantly supportive role, in Antwerp's arts community. In recognition of this, NADFAS has generously agreed to support the event by providing about one third of the projected costs, for which the committee is very grateful. In the coming months we shall be recruiting members to help with the practical work needed to get the show up and running. I hope lots of you will be willing volunteers!

Janet Hammersley has worked hard to get the new ADFAS website set up and it can now be viewed at www.adfas.org, an easy address to remember! The site is not yet (quite) fully finished and will be "tweaked", as Janet puts it, over the coming weeks, as a few adjustments are made and links added.

Don't forget that the December lecture will be at the Antwerp Hilton. Despite the lecture title, this will not be a mere retelling of the biblical story of the Magi but rather a fascinating historical and artistic journey, inspired by legend

but involving many factual figures, locations and artefacts. Our *Newsletter* editors are anxious to recruit members to do short reviews of the ADFAS lectures; so do give it a go. It will add variety and interest if more of us take part in this way and it's not without some personal satisfaction to see your own words in print! See you all at the Hilton.

Trudy Debice

Saturday 21 January 2006
SYMBOLISM IN RUSSIA at the
Musée d'Ixelles / Elsene

We are planning our first outing for 2006 to Brussels, to see one (or two) of the exhibitions which form part of the present Europalia Festival which concentrates on all things Russian. Our guide will be Lieve Dejonghe.

Marking the turn of the century, Russian Symbolism broke away from 19th century Realism and foreshadowed the Avant-Garde movements. It drew its inspiration from legends, tales and myths, from music, theatre and religion, journeys to the East or Occidental influences, and attempted to express the indefinable, the ineffable, the inexpressible.

The "Blue Rose" exhibition of 1907, organised in Moscow by a group of Russian artists, established the originality of the Symbolist movement. Close to Symbolist poets and writers, united in the research of the same aesthetic expression and shunning any individuality, they created their own immaterial world, placing poetic imagination above reality. They gave

their work rhythm, filtered light and fluidity of colours – one of which is the iridescent blue which is so characteristic of their movement.

From 1910, the artists of the "Blue Rose" were influenced by the ideas of Gauguin and Matisse. Artists belonging to the "Blue Rose", as well as French artists, showed their work in astonishing exhibitions in Moscow.

PRICE: EUR 10 (guide included)

TRANSPORT BY PRIVATE CAR:

We meet inside the Museum at 10.15 am. There is an underground parking "La Tulipe/ De Tulp", two blocks away from the museum, 41 rue de la Tulipe.

TRANSPORT BY TRAIN + BUS:

We meet at Berchem Station at 9 am, everyone buys his or her own return week-end ticket to Brussels for € 6,20 (+65: € 3). We take bus 71 from the Central Station to the Museum followed by a 250 m walk.

And for the diehards among us!

In the afternoon we can visit **the FABERGE exhibition** (Carl Fabergé was jeweller to the Romanovs) at the Espace Culture ING, Place Royale.

Entrance for at least 12 persons: € 4, otherwise € 6

Lieve Dejonghe has suggested we take individual audio guides in English (at € 2 per person) as the items are often very small and you need to be able to look at them closely.

Of course we will have LUNCH and fun together in between the two visits!

The ANTWERP HILTON LECTURE

Our lecture on 5 December takes place at
The Antwerp Hilton
Groenplaats
at 7.30 for 8 pm

The December and January lectures

Monday 5 December 2005
**THREE WISE MEN: GOLD,
FRANKINCENSE AND MYRRH –
THE TRADITIONS OF THE
MAGI**
Lecturer: Christopher Bradley



The Three Wise Men are given the names Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar in this late 6th century mosaic from the Basilica of St Apollinarius in Ravenna, Italy

In Christianity, the visit of the Magi to Jesus as a child is commemorated by Roman Catholics and other Christian sects (not Eastern Orthodox) on the day of Epiphany, 6 January. This visit is usually known in Christian art and literature as The Journey of the Magi.

Upon this event Christians have embroidered many circumstantial details about the Magi. One of the most important changes was their rising from astrologers to kings. The general view is that this is linked to Old Testament prophecies that have the Messiah being worshipped by kings. Early readers reinterpreted Matthew in light of these prophecies and elevated the Magi to kings. Others reject this view. They argue that the idea of the Magi as kings arose considerably later in the time after Constantine and the change was made to endorse the role of Christian monarchs. By 500 AD all commentators assumed the three were kings, and this continued until the Protestant Reformation.

The gold the Magi brought speaks of Jesus' kingship. The frankincense, an incense used in temple worship, refers to Jesus' priesthood while the myrrh, a spice or balm used in preparing bodies for burial, foretells his atoning death.

In 2005 UNESCO added to its World Heritage Sites the four Nabatean towns of Haluza, Mamshit, Avdat and Shivta, which along with associated fortresses and agricultural landscapes in the Negev Desert are spread along routes

linking them to the Mediterranean end of the Incense and Spice route. Together they reflect the hugely profitable trade in frankincense and myrrh from south Arabia to the Mediterranean, which flourished from the 3rd century BC until the 2nd century AD and included the time of the birth of Christ and His teachings.

Reasons for inclusion are (i) these towns and their trade routes bear eloquent testimony to the economic, social and cultural importance of frankincense to the Hellenistic-Roman world. They provided a means of passage for frankincense and other trade goods as well as for people and ideas; and (ii) the almost fossilised remains of towns, forts, caravanserais and sophisticated agricultural systems, strung out along the Incense route in the Negev desert, display an outstanding response to a hostile desert environment, one that flourished for five centuries.

Monday 9 January 2005
**RUSSIAN ART UNDER THE
LAST TSAR**
Lecturer: Rosamund Bartlett



Laurits Tuxen: "The Wedding of Nicholas II and Grand Princess Alexandra Fyodorovna", 1895 (detail) State Hermitage Museum

We know much about the last Tsar, Nicholas II, his wife the Tsarina Alexandra, and the tragic way in which they and their five children met their deaths in Yekaterinburg in 1918, during the Russian Revolution. It is sometimes easy to forget that throughout those troubled years many

ordinary Russians continued with their lives, living and working as they had always done. In particular the artists of Russia continued to produce works of art that commanded admiration and respect, then and now.

We are lucky that this year's Europalia exhibition features the art and artists of Russia in all their expressions, from the earliest times until today. In particular, there are two exhibitions at the BOZAR in Brussels which have particular relevance to us in the light of our January lecture: "The Russian Avant-Garde from 1900 until 1935" and "From Tsar to Emperor". If you are interested in visiting these or other exhibitions, call 02/507 85 95 or log onto www.europalia.com for more information, or else join us on 21 January (see Page 1 for details).

Our December lecturer

CHRISTOPHER BRADLEY

Christopher Bradley is an expert in the history and culture of the Middle East. As a professional tour guide and lecturer he has led groups throughout Africa, the Middle East and Asia. He has written extensively on Arabia and is the author of *The Discovery Guide to Yemen*. As a photographer, he has pictures represented by four photographic libraries, with images used by OUP, ABTA and numerous quality newspapers and magazines. Christopher has a broad range of lecturing experience, including to the Royal Geographical Society and the Royal Institute of British Architects. As a film producer and cameraman, he has made documentaries for the BBC, National Geographic and Channel 4.

Our January lecturer

Dr ROSAMUND BARTLETT

Rosamund Bartlett currently lectures in Russian and Music at the University of Durham and is a fellow of the European Humanities Research Centre, Oxford. She has published extensively on Russian cultural history, music and literature, and is now writing a history of opera in Russia, a biography of Chekhov and the chapter on Russian culture 1800-1917 for the new *Cambridge History of Russia*.

Comments on recent events by ADFAS members and other things

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

Digby Hague-Holmes on Landscape into Sound (October 2005)

What a challenge and what a good start of the season! A slideshow accompanied with music extracts in order to make the link between both non verbal languages: Music flowing in time, and Painting standing still. But don't we speak about movement in a painting that doesn't move and about colour of instruments in a piece of music that has no colour?

Well, that's what the lecture of Mr Hague-Holmes was all about. Our daily words are inadequate to describe painting or music. A painter brings a colour composition that can be soft like soft music, but the colours can also clash like heavy cymbals can do in music.

A composer such as Beethoven can create a real thunderstorm in his 6th Symphony, "The Pastoral". First we hear the storm rumbling in the distance, then comes the heavy rainfall and finally the storm fades away. In a later parallel with the impressionist painters, Claude Debussy, away from classic forms and structures, invents new sounds in his Nocturne "Nuages". On the other hand when Vermeer paints "A Young Woman Standing at a Virginal" it all seems so clear, it is as if we can hear the music playing.

I enjoyed the lecture thoroughly but what a pity the sound of the music cassette wasn't better!

GDB

Chloë Sayer on The Arts and Crafts of Mexico, Past and Present (November 2005)

This lecture was a real pleasure for the eyes, thanks to the marvellous and interesting way in which Chloë Sayer presented it to us. She gave us an excellent opportunity to discover the colourful world of Mexican arts and crafts.

We saw with each item examples from the past and their resemblance to work produced in the present.

In Mexico the actual arts and crafts are a mixture of ancient cultures - Olmecs, Zapotecs, Mayans, Aztecs and other people living in this area - together with influences from both Spain and the new religion, Christianity. "Modern" bedspreads are decorated with "old" birds and flowers, mixed with images of horses which were imported by the Spaniards. In ancient times the women used small looms (they still do in some villages) while later the men learned to work on big looms in the mission schools. Embroidery was also imported by the conquistadores, but the local women were very skilful and adapted the art to their own traditions. Nowadays many women still wear the traditional blouses, and nearly every village has its own individual patterns. Cotton is now used together with wool (sheep too were imported from Spain) which produce a nice combination.

Textiles were an important part of the lecture, but other materials were also presented: we saw jewels in gold and silver; many old pieces were melted down by the Spaniards but luckily some remained and the techniques were kept; pottery with ancient patterns combined with lead glaze; bone art (for which nowadays they use dentist's drills ...); and wood. What the Spaniards brought in were the masks, very often made of papier maché. These masks were exhibited during carnival.

Finally, most of the art was and is still made in the villages, but also in the towns as in Mexico City artists are influenced by their ancestors. The result is a unique artistic production.

Christine De Brabandere

WHAT'S COMING UP in Antwerp?

"Europalia Russia" in Antwerp

Until 5 February 2006

Katharina Prospekt

In "Katharina Prospekt", An Vandevorst and Filip Arickx show us their vision of Russia based on the universe of A.F. Vandevorst. The colour red, military uniforms, and religious costumes, but also materials such as leather, fur, and felt are,

indeed, important sources of inspiration in their own collections of clothing.

[Modemuseum, Nationalestr., Antwerp](#)

"Europalia Russia" in Antwerp

Until 27 November 2005

Angels of History

This exhibition designed by Joseph Backstein and Bart De Baere offers a synthesis of "Muscovite Conceptualism" – the second wave of Russian Avant-Garde – and it shows the importance of this historical movement and its influence on Russian artists of the end of the 80's into the 90's.

[MUHKA, Leuvenstraat 32, Antwerp](#)

Until 19 February 2006

Architecture as Sculpture: Renaat Braem and the Pavilion for Sculpture

Renaat Braem (Antwerpen 1910 - Essen 2001), one of the important post-war Belgian architects, was involved from the very start in the plans for the Middelheim Museum. In 1963 he was ordered by the City to design a permanent exhibition room for the more fragile sculptures in the Middelheim collection.

[Middelheim Park, Antwerp](#)

Until 31 December 2005

Sam Dillemans

An exhibition that on how Rubens even today inspires an artists like Sam Dillemans (b. Leuven 1965).

The artist does not really copy a Rubens painting, but re-interprets it and to this aim he uses big layers of paint.

[Rubenshuis, Wapper 9-11, Antwerp](#)

Until 16 December 2005

Een scheutje Schotland in Antwerpen

Mo-Fr 9.30 am – 5 pm Infopunt

Europa, Vredescentrum

[Lombardenvest 23-25, Antwerp](#)

(Editors' note: During the October lecture, Digby Hague-Holmes referred to something called Coloured Hearing Synaesthesia; curious as ever, we looked it up and can now tell you that synaesthesia means the mixing of two or more senses; in the context of the lecture, it means seeing music in colours. Do any of our members have this strange extra ability? We would love to hear from you if you do.)

DATES TO REMEMBER

2005-2006 Season:

5 December 2005	The Antwerp Hilton Lecture: Three Wise Men: Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh – the Traditions of the Magi Lecturer: Christopher Bradley	Hilton Hotel Antwerp	7.30 pm
13 December 2005	ADFAS Committee Meeting (if you have anything you would like brought up at the Committee meeting, please get in touch with Trudy Debice or Georgina Murphy)		
9 January 2006	Russian Art under the Last Tsar Lecturer: Dr Rosamund Bartlett	Rubenshof, 1st floor	7.30 pm
21 January 2006	All-day outing to the Europalia exhibitions: Symbolism in Russia and Fabergé	Information: Gilberte Du Bois on 03/230 98 72	
6 February 2006	The Florentine Renaissance Palace Lecturer: Dr James R. Lindow	Rubenshof, 1st floor	7.30 pm
6 March 2006	'The New Berlin': Art and Architecture Lecturer: Eveline Eaton	Rubenshof, 1st floor	7.30 pm
3 April 2006	'Mission Impossible', The Awkward Relation Between Art and Reality Lecturer: Claire Portheine	Rubenshof, 1st floor	7.30 pm
8 May 2006	A Garden Tour of Europe Lecturer: Maggie Lamb	Rubenshof, 1st floor	7.30 pm

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