

THE NEWSLETTER

Issue No.3 – January/February 2006

Trudy's Chairwords

It is very heartening to continue to have good attendance at the ADFAS lectures this season, 50 at The Hilton in December & 51 (& a bit of a squeeze!) at the lecture on *Russian Art Under the Last Tsar*. Long may it continue!

In February we have arranged to have a pre-lecture supper at the Rubenshof, which was very successful last year and I hope that many of you will be free to enjoy the opportunity of socializing with other ADFAS members and their friends. Our lecturer, Dr. James Lindow, will also be present.

Until then, all good wishes for 2006 from the ADFAS Committee and myself.

Trudy Debice

SUPPER AT THE RUBENSHOF

As our pre-lecture supper at the Rubenshof last season was such an enjoyable occasion, we are repeating it before the February lecture.

Menu

Soup of the day *or* Cheese croquettes
Steak with pepper sauce *or* Fried cod fillets, served with French fries
Sweet *or* coffee

Price: €18.60 per person

Alternatives:

Starter – Carpaccio of Beef *or* Smoked ham with Melon - €2 extra

Main – Filet of Veal *or* Filet of Lamb - €4 extra

(This does not include drinks, which will be charged for separately.)

Time: 18.45 for 19.00 hours.

Please call Trudy or Georgina (numbers on the last page) by Thursday, 2 February at the latest if

you would like to join the supper party. At the same time can you let us know your choice of menu. Payments are to be made on the night.

WHAT'S COMING UP in Antwerp?

27 January to 30 April 2006

Don Quixote and other Caballeros in James Ensor's early work

The KMSKA houses the world's largest collection of drawings by Ensor, including an almost homogeneous group of 66 drawings, most depicting sixteenth-century Spanish soldiers. We know for certain that one of the drawings is a copy of an illustration by Gustave Doré for a French publication of Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. Some of these drawings have been exhibited in Salamanca and Seville. The set is now being shown in its entirety for the first time. In this series the visitor sees Ensor at work during the years he spent at the Brussels academy.

KMSKA, Leopold De Waelplaats, Antwerp

From 10 March 2006

Realism from Brouwer to de Braekeleer. a new presentation of the Museum's Collection

The museum is working step by step towards a new presentation of its collection. Seven rooms are currently being renovated on the upper floor. The new presentation highlights the continuity of the painter's works in the Low Countries from the 17th century to the end of the 19th century. The development of new representations of the world in art such as the landscape, the still life, and scenes from daily life is to some extent due to Antwerp's 16th century painters. A number of artists

fled the Spanish occupation and made a major contribution to what has become known as Dutch realism. In the 19th century artists such as Henri De Braekeleer and Félicien Rops became convinced of the value of painting 'en plein air' and they rediscover the realism of the 17th century

KMSKA

Letter to the Editors:

I can't pretend to have anything as aesthetic as "coloured synaesthesia", so well described in the Issue No. 2 *Newsletter*, but I find the subject of colour and music fascinating. James (Abbott McNeil) Whistler was adamant that painting should have the same autonomy as music and thus titled many of his works with musical themes, *Nocturne in Black and Gold* and *Symphony in Grey* for example.

While music can evoke images (as you say, the thunderstorm in Beethoven's *Pastoral*) it is never required to *explain* itself in the way that we ask of a painting "but what does it mean?" An extract from *The Oxford Dictionary of Art* quotes Whistler "... Art [I think he means all art] should be independent of all claptrap - should stand alone, and appeal to the artistic sense of eye or ear, without confounding this with emotions entirely foreign to it, as devotion, pity, love, patriotism, and the like ... and that is why I insist on calling my works 'arrangements' and 'harmonies' ". Of course, not everyone agreed with him then, late nineteenth century, or even today!

Marion Lawrence

Our meeting place:

**Café/Restaurant Rubenshof (first floor), Groenplaats 9,
2000 Antwerpen (tel: 03/231 59 52)**

February's lecture will start at the later time of 8.30 pm

The February and March lectures

Monday 6 February 2006
THE FLORENTINE
RENAISSANCE PALACE
Lecturer: Dr James Lindow

An outstanding example of secular architecture in Florence was the Medici Palace (1444-59, now called the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi), built by Michelozzo who was a follower of Brunelleschi. Created for Cosimo de' Medici, a great political leader and art patron in Florence, the palace was arranged around a central court, the traditional Florentine palace plan. Medieval Florentine palaces were built of great rusticated blocks of stone looking as if they had just been hacked out of the quarry and giving the impression of fortification. With the Renaissance, some fundamental changes appeared. Michelozzo crowned his palace with a massive horizontal cornice in the classical style and regularized the window and entrance openings. Even the rustication of the stonework was different in each of the three stories.



Palazzo Medici-Riccardi, Florence, facade, begun 1444 by Michelozzo di Bartolommeo (Italian, ca. 1396-1472) (expanded in the 17th century by the Riccardi family)

For more information go to <http://www.archpedia.com/Styles-Renaissance-2.html>

An interesting note: the design of the Antwerp City Hall by Cornelis Floris II de Vriendt was influenced heavily by Italian architecture and is a Flemish variant of Florentine palaces. The city hall was constructed between 1561 and 1565 and influenced the design of many government buildings across North and Central Europe.

Monday 6 March 2006
THE 'NEW' BERLIN: ART AND
ARCHITECTURE
Lecturer: Eveline Eaton

Berlin, city of contrasts, a confluence of historic and modern, brilliant and stark, flourishing and forgotten. This multicultural city, considered a haven for artists and international residents, has been growing since the federal government of unified Germany moved from Bonn to Berlin in 1999. It is a wonderful city to explore on foot, with its distinctive architecture and abundant outdoor cafés.

The Chancellery, sometimes called the "washing machine" thanks to its shape and windows, is a work of modern art. The lightness and openness of this building are meant to symbolise the transparency of today's German government.



The Chancellery

Potsdamer Platz, once a bustling commercial center, was destroyed by allied bombing in WWII, with the little



The Sony building on Potsdamer Platz which contains the Filmmuseum (above and below)



that remained flattened when the Wall went up in 1961. Since the 1990s, new construction has given the area an ultra-modern feel.

The Reichstag, home to Germany's parliament, was built in 1894, but a fire in 1933 destroyed the dome and much of the interior; WWII damaged the building further. Renovation began in 1958, although the glass dome, open to the public, wasn't built until after the country's reunification in 1989.



The new Reichstag dome (architect: Sir Norman Foster)

For more information go to <http://www.eveandersson.com/germany/berlin>

Our February lecturer

Dr JAMES LINDOW

Dr James R. Lindow has a doctorate in History of Art at the joint institutions of the Royal College of Art and the Victoria & Albert Museum. He also has an MA in Advanced Art Historical and related Studies and a degree in Art History of Art and Architecture from the University of East Anglia. He lectures frequently at conferences and has been involved in a major exhibition at the V&A on Renaissance Domestic Interior.

Our March lecturer

EVELINE EATON

Eveline Eaton is a free-lance art historian, lecturing and guiding art trips all over the world. She was educated at the Study Centre for Fine and Decorative Arts, London, and obtained her BA Hons degree at London University's Courtauld Institute. Originally from Germany, Eveline has lived in London since 1973.

Comments by ADFAS members on recent events and other things

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

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

An introduction to Christopher Bradley and the substance of his Antwerp Hilton Lecture “*Three Wise Men: Gold Frankincense and Myrrh – the Traditions of the Magi*” are covered in November/December’s Newsletter. So let us think of the carol:

*We three Kings of Orient are
Bearing gifts we travel afar
Field & fountain moor and mountain
Following yonder star*

and what Christopher extensively & entertainingly told us lay behind these words that are inspired by Matthew’s Gospel, the only one that deals with Christ’s birth.

They were not Kings but Magi, could have been three but might even have been forty, most probably came from the East but not from the Orient, certainly bore gifts, had to cross rugged and daunting middle eastern landscapes rather than what is so beguilingly described, and were guided, most probably, by a rare astronomical event, including a star, which occurred on the 29th July 7 BC.

MAGI: Although later upgraded to Kings, they were not so at the time. Kings in those times did not take kindly to other Kings swanning around their kingdom. Certainly not Herod, a through going psychopath if ever there was one, who had brutally eliminated most rivals, including the greater part of his family. Magis were in no way military men, as were Kings, and had a protected status akin to diplomats because of their wisdom, ability to interpret dreams, to predict and explain natural events and, notably, for their great knowledge of the night sky – a potent place for signs. They came into being as priest-sages in the service of Zoroaster (also called Zarathustra), a “one-god” to whom you could speak directly but who answered you in dreams and signs.

THREE: To us they are three, traditionally called Balthazar, Melchior & Casper. Early references also speak of two and twelve. Forty? Whatever

their number they would have traveled in large groups, either walking or on horseback (camels carried the goods) in caravan for safety’s sake. Tradition has fixed on three for mystical & symbolic reasons. Three Magi, bearing three gifts to an embodiment of the Trinity in the Christ Child. Who could have been new-born, or anywhere between 41 days and 6 years old.

ORIENT: Of the three traditional gifts of Gold, Frankincense & Myrrh, we know the last two from our knowledge of the Incense Route; they came from Dofar, way down South (relative to Bethlehem) in the Arabian peninsula. Gold had no similar particular location. The extensive, established Incense Trade meant that the Magi did not have to travel South to get their Frankincense & Myrrh but, even if they did they would in all probability have started where Zoroastrianism originated: towards the East.

STAR: It seems reasonable to think that it would have needed some really potent sign to impel the Magi to undertake a long, difficult, expensive & perilous journey to bring gifts to what was, at first sight, a less than obvious future King? Quite some star. The Magi would have predicted and then seen, according to our calendar, on 29th July 7 BC a most spectacular and rare event: a triple conjunction of the two largest planets, Jupiter & Saturn, and the bright star Cyrus. That was a message that the Magi, by virtue of position & training, would have had to follow up.

TRAVEL AFAR: We know more of their coming than of their returning. Avoiding any further contact with Herod the three fade away into the mists of time – almost. There is a strong tradition amongst the Christian communities in South India that they were established long ago by the Magi. Three such Magi, it is believed, were buried in great magnificence, which is now to be seen in Cologne – The Dom being built around them. Why Cologne? The fortunes and vicissitudes of war brought their catafalque there – an ironic fate for peaceful men who brought gifts to the King of Peace.

MS

Rosamund Bartlett on Russian Art under the Last Tsar (January 2006)

An energising lecturer, connecting all forms of art from painting to literature, music, theatre, ballet and architecture and regularly putting questions to the audience, what a pleasure!

The lecture covered the period 1894-1917, the reign of the last Tsar Nicholas II. It was a period one could call a Russian Renaissance in which everything changed. The rich Moscow merchants took over the power from the nobles and the military from St Petersburg. Portraits were painted instead of icons. Russian opera and music was cultivated and the Italian opera was banished. The literary forms change from the long Tolstoi sagas to Chekhov’s short stories. Modernist architects built Art Nouveau houses. The revolution in arts took place before the theatrical masters like Stanislavski and Diaghilev renovated theatre and ballet performances, choking audiences with the expressionistic decors and wild costume designs. And women artists, like Natalia Goncharova, could express themselves for the first time. With this lecture our speaker emphasized one of the great characteristics of Russia: the great extremes, in feelings, in wealth and poverty, in climate, in nature etc.

Nice music extracts from Rachmaninov, Scriabin, Stravinsky and other composers interpreted by Russian artists gave me the feeling of a very comprehensive lecture on Russian Art in that short period of time.

GDB

Visit

On 19 November a group of 8 ADFAS members and friends visited the exhibition “Women of Distinction” in the renovated former brewery Lamot, in Mechelen. A very interesting exhibition of one of the richest periods

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in the history of Flanders and featuring two widowed women, Margaret of York and Margaret of Austria, who both played an active role in European political and cultural life.

The visit ended with a good lunch in the Lamot center itself. We all agreed that the works exhibited were of a very high quality, but the negative points were that the rooms were far too dark and that it lacked any chronology.

If I had to give a "Top three" of the exhibition, I would choose: the beautiful portrait paintings, the marvellous tapestries and a set of 27 most exquisite wooden pieces carved with historical portraits

GDB

DATES TO REMEMBER

2005-2006 Season:

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 (preceded by supper at the Rubenshof – see page 1)	Rubenshof, 1st floor	7.30 pm
7 February 2006	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)		
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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