

THE NEWSLETTER

Issue No.2 – November/December 2007

An Introduction

Dear Members,

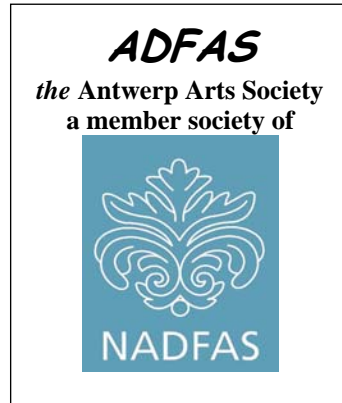
What good lectures we have had so far this season. Once again our existence as a decorative and fine arts appreciation society has been justified, and it has been good to see so many friends who have renewed their membership and are willing to come out on a dark autumnal night to listen to our speakers.

Our next lecture will be at a different venue – I am not saying at a new one, as when ADFAS started some sixteen years ago, we used to meet in the Church Hall at St.Boniface; we are now returning there. Several complaints have been received by your committee about the Rubenshof, in particular that the stairs to the upstairs room are difficult to negotiate, and that there is no emergency fire exit.

We have therefore decided to move to the Church Hall for the remainder of this season; at our AGM (which the last AGM agreed will be in May 2008) we can discuss the success or otherwise of the Church Hall (instructions on how to get there are below), and either decide to remain there in the future or start looking for an alternative meeting place. Please do let us know what you think of it.

Our next get-together is for the British Vision exhibition in Gent, and I am looking forward to seeing many of you there. We meet at 10.45 am in the entry hall of the museum. Lunch afterwards for those who want. Elsewhere in this Newsletter there is information about other exhibitions which are on at the moment; there is plenty to see and do in Belgium in the weeks leading up to Christmas.

Angela Dodds



We're moving

If you were at the November meeting, you will know that our December lecture is at the St.Boniface Church Hall in the Grétrystraat, 2018 Antwerpen. We have also booked the Church Hall for all lectures until May 2008.

The Church Hall has many advantages over the Rubenshof; there are no stairs, and it is easily accessible for everyone, including wheelchair users. It is larger, offering more room for visitors and more space for the lecturer. In addition we can provide and serve our own refreshments, at a lower price and with any profit being for the benefit of ADFAS. Do remember that we will be there from 7 pm onwards each lecture evening, so do come along and have a coffee or a glass of wine with your friends before the lecture starts.

For those who haven't visited the Church Hall before, here are details of how to get there.

Public transport: Trams 2, 6 and 15 along the Belgiëlei; get out at the "Lange Leemstraat" stop and walk towards Harmonie; take the 2nd left into the Grétrystraat and the church is half way down on the left. The entrance to the Church Hall is just past the church, through a small garden and along a corridor. Tram 7: stops at Harmonie; go into the Belgiëlei and take the 2nd right into the Grétrystraat. Buses 190, 192, 193, 195, 196, 197 and 297 all stop at Harmonie.

By car: Grétrystraat is between the Belgiëlei and Lamoriniërestraat, and parking is possible in any of the small streets around the church.

If you need any further directions, do get in touch with any member of the committee.

WHAT'S ON

Rubens Exhibition in Brussels

14/09/2007-27/01/2008

'Rubens, a Genius at Work', is at the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Brussels, Regentstraat 3, near the Central Station.

The exhibition includes works from the museum's collections as well as paintings and drawings on loan from foreign museums. It comprises some 50 works by Rubens that are already in Belgium, and about 60 paintings and drawings are also on loan from museums abroad, including the Louvre in Paris, the Prado in Madrid and the New York Metropolitan Museum. Works that he produced together with other masters including Jan Brueghel the Elder and Cornelis de Vos are also on show. The exhibition hopes to give the general public greater insight into the way Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) and his peers created their most famous works.

Rubens, one of greatest exponents of the Baroque, was a multi-talented artist: he painted, drew and also designed statues and buildings. He was famous for his voluptuous (Rubensian) female figures. He was knighted by Charles I of England in 1629.

**Our meeting place:
The Church Hall (St.Boniface
Anglican Church), Grétrystraat,
2018 Antwerpen
Info: 03/230 39 36.**

The October and November lectures

Monday 3 December 2007
PHOTOGRAPHY: AN
OVERVIEW
Lecturer: Marina Vaizey

This lecture is divided into three sections. Part a), From Then until Now, looks at some of the pioneers of the technical innovation of photography in the 1830s and 1840s, since when it has become the most widely available visual art in the world. Part b), "From Today Painting is Dead", examines the French history painter Paul Delaroche's famous declaration, made in 1839, and shows how wrong he was. On the contrary painting has gone from strength to strength and we look at some of the artists who took and take photographs of their own, from Degas to Hockney. And part c), A Primary Medium, looks at artists for whom photography is not just a tool but a primary medium, and whose medium is the photograph, both straight and manipulated

As a complete novice in the matter, what can I add to catch your attention? Well, I surfed on the web and found several different sites which are worth checking out such as <http://foto.net>, a very informative site but I also found www.thespiderawards.com which has awards for so many categories as Abstract, Advertising, Architectural, Fashion, Fine Art, Nature, People, Photojournalism, Sports, Still Life Silhouette, Vintage and Nude, with a difference between professional and amateur, all in black and white. Marvellous, go and have a look!

GDB



Photographer: Michele Clement
Winner, Photographer of the Year,
2006

(Our lecture in December has by tradition come to mean a little bit of Christmas celebration. Thanks to the help of some dedicated ADFAS members, we can this year look forward to mulled wine (at €2 a glass) and of course coffee for those who prefer it. ADFAS is offering mince pies and Christmas cake, and as usual there will be a fund-raising tombola with good prizes.)

Monday 7 January 2007
20th CENTURY GLASS
Lecturer: ANDY McCONNELL

Glass – some I love, some I hate. I also remember we had beautiful glass work at one of our ADFAS Contemporary Art Exhibitions.

But on the web I found a description of a book as follows:

"The fact is you don't have to be a maniac to like glass. Big, bold, colourful and sculptural or small and delicate, it sits comfortably in our well-lit modern homes. And which ceramics enjoy the dynamic, light-refractive qualities of glass? None.

"So, if glass is so great, why has it been ignored for so long? The trouble is that, unlike most other popular collecting areas, glass rarely bears identifying marks or signatures. So, if you don't know even when a piece was made, let alone its maker or designer, how can the novice begin to make informed decisions? The answer is, with difficulty. That is, until now.

"A new 256-page Miller's book, 20th Century Glass, provides a wealth of background information previously the exclusive preserve of hard-core train-spotter types. Research trips totalling 5,000 miles across Finland, Denmark, Sweden, France, the Czech Republic and Venice, led author and *Antiques Roadshow* glass specialist Andy McConnell into the archives of many of the world's leading 20th century glassworks. In many cases, he gained unique access, finding storerooms packed with pieces and mountains of original paperwork. These have been carefully sifted, photographed and reproduced for the first time in this must-have book, together with easy-to-read biographies of the designers who

shaped an important era in the history of glass."

And of course Andy McConnell is our January speaker! Having read this description of his book, I am sure you don't want to miss his lecture. I will certainly be there and am looking forward to listen to the expert Mr McConnell.

GDB

Our lecturers

MARINA VAIZEY

Marina Vaizey read history at Harvard and Cambridge. She has been an art critic for over 30 years for various publications, including *The Financial Times* and *The Sunday Times*. She has curated several exhibitions and written several books. She edited the *Art Quarterly* and *The Review* for the National Art Collections Fund and later served as editorial consultant; she is a member of the Arts Council and the Crafts Council, and is currently a trustee of several museums, while she also writes, lectures and travels.

ANDY McCONNELL

Andy McConnell has dealt in antiques since adolescence, but served an apprenticeship in journalism. After working in music, film and television, his return to writing was marked by the publication in 2004 of *The Decanter, An illustrated History of Glass from 1650*. He is the author of the best-selling new book *20th Century Glass*, published by Miller's last August, which has just sold out its initial 8,000 print-run.. He writes on a regular basis for numerous newspapers, magazines and guides, appeared frequently on The 20th Century Roadshow and has recently become the first-ever glass specialist on the Antiques Roadshow.

More WHAT'S ON

Arboretum, Kalmthout

25 November from 10 am to 5 pm

End of Season Event – entry free, welcoming drink. Guided walk at 2 pm. Latest plant and gardening books in the gift shop, as well as Christmas presents. Flower arrangement demonstrations and displays.

Other items of interest

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

Roddy Taylor on The World of Carpets (October 2007)

Mr Taylor is one of those lecturers who are born story tellers. He doesn't need notes and nevertheless his lecture is very well structured. His introduction on Oriental Carpets was extremely clear and instructive. European learned about the existence of carpets around 1453 via the Ottomans and later through the work of the Venetian Gentile Bellini, who in one of his paintings showed an oriental carpet. It was considerate to be a precious item, a royal object of very high art.

As for the material a carpet is made of, it is not everlasting and most old oriental carpets are only 100-150 years of age. But of course there are some exceptions (museum pieces) such as the piece of carpet (35 by 35 inches) excavated from a tomb in Russia, near Mongolia, and which has been carbon dated to 500 BC.

As for the decoration, it is very simple: every oriental carpet has a centre with decoration (taken from architecture or nature) and borders.

The stylised flower, plants and animal decorations are very recognisable, but the architectural decoration can be the designs of buildings, gardens, fountains, mosaics, flowerbeds, etc. In the centre of very early Turkish rugs there are different repetitive patterns like Crusaders' shields.

The oldest carpet in Europe has birds (nature) in the middle and they look like Grouse, just as we find birds in mosaics. A closer look at a Chinese carpet shows fighting royal dragons as a pattern in the middle. In one of Holbein's paintings we see an oriental carpet on the table (as we still see nowadays in the Low Countries) together with scientific and cultural elements, which gave once more the feeling of the carpet being a very precious object. Silk carpets hold colours differently than wool and can make finer designs; to illustrate this Mr Taylor showed us a slide of the greatest carpet in the world where the centre is nothing other than the reflection of the Mosque's chandelier. In Isfahan (Iran) the Shah set up looms where carpets with gold threads were produced, these often being given as presents.

With his charming voice and witty comments Mr Taylor continued to tell us marvellous stories about the designs of Turkish, Polish, Spanish, Indian, Dutch and Portuguese carpets. He also referred to the Prayer carpets with the Torah or the Koran.

The talk ended with some interesting slides about the treatment of the wool and the dyeing techniques, but the big finale was the real carpets! The speaker had made the effort to carry to the lecture some very special rugs and carpets to end his lecture in a very amusing way. Thank you Mr Taylor.

GDB

Douglas Skeggs on Van Gogh and Gauguin (November 2007)

Everyone knows the story of Vincent van Gogh: the 19th century ginger-haired and wild-eyed Dutch artist who went off to the south of France, cut off his own ear in a fit of maniacal rage, and died in a lunatic asylum never having sold a picture.

Douglas Skeggs, however, corrected some of the above and filled out the life and personality of one of the most brilliant of artists. Vincent van Gogh was born on 30 March 1852 but died very shortly thereafter; his brother, also called Vincent, was born one year to the day later and this Vincent never threw off the shadow of the death of his older sibling, living with a sense of rejection and deep loneliness all his life. Unable to communicate with others face-to-face, with a pen or paintbrush in his hand he was different. Almost all we know of Vincent van Gogh the man comes from his extensive correspondence with his younger brother Theo, where he expressed his feelings in a manner he found impossible in any other way – except in the paintings he filled with such energy, feeling and emotion.

After a varied career, including in 1886 a short period of study at the art academy in Antwerp, Vincent moved to Paris, where he learnt that it is not important what you paint but how you paint it. Paris was expensive, so with financial support from Theo, Vincent set off south to Arles. Here he decided to set up a "Fellowship of Artists in the

South" but only Paul Gauguin, an eccentric ex-Parisian stockbroker who had lost all his money and become instead a professional artist, agreed to join him. From the beginning they were at loggerheads and would argue deep into the night, Van Gogh by now an alcoholic who hardly ate anything – the strain on his mind already apparent.

On Christmas Eve 1888, after yet another argument, Vincent van Gogh threw a glass of absinthe in Paul Gauguin's face. Next day the drinking started again, and Gauguin went into the streets of Arles on his own – to be followed by Van Gogh waving a knife. Van Gogh, however, realised what he was about to do and returned to their lodgings, where – in a fit of remorse? or a need to clear his mind by causing pain to himself? – he purposely mutilated his own ear. Gauguin could not cope any more and left for Paris; the two men never met again.

Bouts of mania followed and Vincent was forcibly kept in hospital. Although increasingly aware of his madness, he had short periods of lucidity when he worked feverishly, attacking the canvas with intense mental concentration, producing 2 or 3 paintings a day but unable to remember by the end much of what he had done.

Vincent now wrote to Theo begging for his freedom. Eventually Theo took him back to Paris and found lodgings for him just outside the city; here, a year later, Vincent obtained a pistol and shot himself. Could this have been the freedom he had been seeking – the freedom to end the life he no longer wanted to live? Theo did not long survive Vincent's death; almost immediately he also began to show signs of madness, and died only six months after his brother. Their graves lie side by side in the churchyard at Auvers, where Vincent had lived during his last few months.

Douglas Skeggs gave us a talk full of interesting facts. He spoke with an obvious love of his subjects, the intense awkward genius that was Van Gogh and the flamboyant creature, Gauguin. In addition Douglas's use of digital equipment provided clear, faultless illustrations.

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DATES TO REMEMBER

24 November 2007	Outing to Gent: guided tour of the <i>British Vision</i> exhibition at the Ghent Museum of Fine Art	Details on page 1 of this Newsletter
3 December 2007	<i>The Art of Photography: Photography as Art</i> Lecturer: Marina Vaizey	Church Hall, Grétrystraat as from 7 pm Lecture at 8 pm
12 December 2007	ADFAS Committee Meeting (if you have anything you would like brought up at the Committee meeting, please get in touch with Michael Smith)	
7 January 2008	<i>20th Century Glass</i> Lecturer: Andy McConnell	Church Hall, Grétrystraat as from 7 pm Lecture at 8 pm
4 February 2008	<i>Cities of Vesuvius: Art and Everyday Life in Ancient Pompeii</i> Lecturer: Neil Faulkner	Preceded by annual supper Church Hall, Grétrystraat as from 7 pm Lecture at 8 pm
10 March 2008	<i>Pearls before Swine</i> Lecturer: Jane Kelsall	Church Hall, Grétrystraat as from 7 pm Lecture at 8 pm
April 2008	<i>Treasures and Curiosities from the Royal Library at Windsor Castle</i> Lecturer: Oliver Everett	Church Hall, Grétrystraat as from 7 pm Lecture at 8 pm
5 May 2008	<i>Wine-related Antiques</i> Lecturer: John Ericson	Church Hall, Grétrystraat as from 7 pm Lecture at 8 pm

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