

THE NEWSLETTER

Issue No.4 – March-April 2009

An Introduction

Dear Members,

It's hard to believe that we only have two lectures left before the summer break. The season seems to have gone so quickly. But there is a lot happening in NADFAS before our last talk in May; Edgard and I will be attending the Directory meeting (when we listen to and have the opportunity to speak with possible future lecturers) and the Mainland Europe area meeting. Then Gilberte will be representing ADFAS at a Volunteers meeting, and I will be going to the Annual General Meeting; all four of these events are in London.

Back in Antwerp, we have organised a visit to St. Boniface Church, information on which is elsewhere on this page. At the May meeting we have our AGM, and before then, at the next (April) meeting, we will be holding our last raffle of the season, with several good prizes to be won.

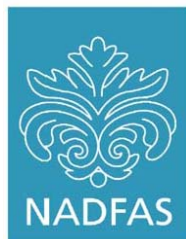
Finally, we are planning our annual outing for Saturday 20 June so note the date! Ideas are still being discussed, and information should be available at the April meeting.

Most important, of course, is the AGM. Sadly, we are losing three of our present committee members: Peter Fletcher is retiring for health reasons and Shirley Fletcher will be leaving with him; while Gilberte Du Bois feels she has been on the committee for long enough (at least five years) and she should make place for someone else.

So please, if you want to support ADFAS, if you have a little time and lots of ideas, put yourself up for the committee. It's worthwhile, enjoyable and it's great fun. If you want to know more, approach any member of the present committee and find out what's required.

Angela Dodds

ADFAS
the Antwerp Arts Society
a member society of



*Visit to the Vleeshuis Museum,
7 February 2009*

Eighteen members and friends had a guided tour at the "Vleeshuis" Museum through the permanent exhibition *Sounds of the City*.

Key Minnebo was once more our perfect guide. She gave a short introduction about the building, and a few but very to the point explanations on how to use the hand computer so that we could hear the music examples.

Downstairs the reconstructed bell foundry and ball room from 1900 were the highlights. Furthermore Key in her clear voice explained the importance of music in maintaining order and authority in the city. She talked about the military music with fifes and drums, the city trumpeters for special events, the carillon playing on bell towers which is so typical for the Low Countries, the horn of the bellman, etc. Music playing was for a very long time strictly organised in guilds and street players were looked at as beggars.

It was only after the French Revolution that music playing and dancing became more popular, that couples dancing waltzes and polkas were allowed and so were public concerts.

Church music, music printing, music instruments with some harpsichord made by the famous Rückert family in Antwerp, all but opera music (where a

group of people were having a lecture) was covered by our guide.

Those present had a wonderful and interesting morning that ended in a café around the corner.

GDB

Tour of St. Boniface

St. Boniface Anglican Church was completed in 1910, and next year sees its centenary. It was recognized as a protected monument some years ago, which underlines its importance not just to the Anglican community in and around Antwerp, but also to the City of Antwerp and to local history.

We first met for an ADFAS lecture in the St. Boniface Church Hall in October 1991; as the society became too big for the hall, meetings were moved to the Romi Goldmuntz Centre. Over the years, however, membership has dwindled again and we find ourselves comfortably back where we started, in the Church Hall. Many of our members, however, have probably never seen the Church itself, and to rectify this we have arranged an afternoon tour of St. Boniface, led by one of its long-standing members, John Dashwood, followed by an English tea in the hall.

Date: Saturday 25 April at 2:30 pm sharp (please be in the Church Hall a few minutes before then)

Cost: € 15 per person, for both tour and afternoon tea

Booking/information: Gilberte Du Bois at gilberte.dubois@belgacom.net, or call her on 03/230 98 72

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

The April and May lectures

Monday 6 April 2009
BEYOND THE GILDED STAGE:
The Social and Cultural History of
Opera
Lecturer: DANIEL SNOWMAN

More opera is performed, financed, seen, heard, filmed and broadcast than ever before, and the world's top performers are worshipped and paid like pop stars. Yet no new opera since *Turandot* has entered the popular canon, the art form is widely derided as 'elitist', state subsidies are everywhere in freefall and the classical recording business appears to be approaching bankruptcy. Opera, it seems, is in crisis. But is it? Hasn't opera always been in crisis? We will explore the many chains of connection between opera houses and impresarios, monarchs and money makers, art, artists and audiences from the birth of opera to the present day.



Stage design for Wagner's Flying Dutchman, made in 1864

In this lecture, we follow the story of the creation, production and reception of opera, from its beginnings in the courts of northern Italy, across the map of Europe, the Americas and the wider world to the global business it had become in the digital age.



The Sydney Opera House, one of the most recognisable buildings in the world

Our lecturer's latest book, also entitled *Beyond the Gilded Stage* and covering in depth the same subject as our lecture, will be published later in 2009.

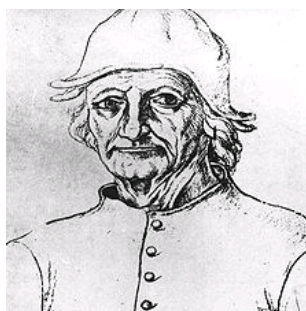
Daniel Snowman

Monday 4 May 2009
THE PAINTINGS OF
HIERONYMOUS BOSCH
Lecturer: VALERIE WOODGATE

Very little is known of Hieronymous Bosch, or Jeroen van Aken to give him his proper name; he received the name 'Bosch' after the city of 's-Hertogenbosch in the Netherlands, where he was born, worked and died. Based on the self-portrait below, and with his date of death known, it is calculated that he was probably born some time around 1450. His paintings, of which only a very few have been attributed with absolute certainty to him, have influenced many artists, and parallels are often drawn between his work and the work of the 20th century painter Salvador Dali.

Hieronymous Bosch's paintings of devils, demons and deadly sins are truly unforgettable. At the same time, his extraordinary treatment of religious themes can be deeply moving. His works are among the most mysterious in the whole of European art, yet if we examine them in the context of contemporary politics and cultural sources we find that not only are they perfectly understandable, but they also provide an amazing insight into the society in which the artist lived.

Valerie Woodgate



Thought to be a self-portrait of Hieronymous Bosch, drawn shortly before his death in 1516

Our February and March lecturers

DANIEL SNOWMAN

Educated at Cambridge and Cornell, Daniel Snowman became a lecturer at Sussex University at the age of 24. He was Chief Producer (Features) at the

BBC for many years and was responsible for a wide variety of radio series on cultural and historical subjects. As a long-time member (and former Chairman) of the London Philharmonic Choir, he has always had a strong and informed interest in music and musicians. In addition, he has maintained a busy and successful freelance career as author and lecturer.

VALERIE WOODGATE

Valerie Woodgate works as a lecturer and guide in Tate Britain, Tate Modern and other major galleries, and on religious art in churches and cathedrals. She is a member of the teaching team at the Dulwich Picture Gallery and a script-writer for the Living Paintings Trust (art for the blind and partially sighted). She also runs courses at colleges of further education.

Invitations from other Groups (1)

Antwerp British and International Women's Club has asked us to join them for two forthcoming events:

(i) A visit to the ceiling painting of the Hofkamer, the oldest and largest ceiling painting in Belgium, which has been moved to the ING Building for restoration. Guide: Key Minnebo.

Date: Friday 27 March, 9.45 am sharp
Cost: €12 per person for non-members of ABIW

Information/reservations:

heather.hartung@pandora.be, or call Heather Hartung on 03/383 34 79.

(ii) A talk by Werner van Hoof, Curator of the new Museum aan de Stroom (the MAS), due to open in 2010. The MAS will house the collections currently held at the Maritime Museum, the Vleeshuis and Folklore museums. Overseeing the move to the MAS is only the tip of the iceberg – there is far more happening behind the scenes.

Date: Tuesday 7 April, meeting at 10 am for coffee at Salons De Laet

Cost: €5 per person for non-members of ABIW (includes coffee)

Information/reservations:

valeriecarroll@hotmail.com, or call Valerie Carroll on 03/254 03 73.

Other items of interest

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

Elizabeth Gordon on the City of Byzantium / Constantinople / Istanbul (February 2009)

Elizabeth Gordon, our March lecturer, is very familiar to ADFAS, this being her fourth visit to Antwerp, and we were pleased to see her again, speaking on a subject she obviously feels very passionate about – Istanbul.

Istanbul has a long, turbulent but above all interesting history. It began with the Greeks; one of their leaders, Byzas, consulted the oracle at Delphi about building a new city and was told to look for a site "opposite the city of the blind". In about 667 BC Byzas founded the city named after him on the shores of the Bosphorus at the very edge of Europe – opposite a city on the Asiatic side built by those who were blind to the advantages of building on the European side.

The Roman Emperor Constantine went east and in 330 AD built a new Rome on top of the old city of Byzantium; it became Constantinople, or the City of Constantine and was the chief city of the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire following the fall of Rome in 476 AD. The walls around Byzantium, first built by the Romans and rebuilt and reinforced many times, were finally 30 miles long and remained standing for over 1,000 years until the Ottomans conquered Constantinople in 1453 and the Roman Empire finally came to an end.



"They were not able to believe that there could be so rich a town in the whole world, those high walls and mighty towers, those luxurious palaces and lofty churches."
Geoffrey de Villehardouin (a Crusader)

Constantine's city was a Christian city, full of churches. When the Ottomans took over, they turned the churches into mosques; the most famous church, the Hagia Sofia, built in the 6th century AD, had been the largest cathedral in Christendom for almost 1,000 years. It became a mosque, and then a museum in the 1930s. This was



Mosaic in the Hagia Sofia showing the Virgin and Child flanked by Justinian I and Constantine I

after Turkey became a Republic in 1923, with Kemal Ataturk as first president and the city received a new name: Istanbul. Ataturk eliminated Islamic law, supported women's right to vote, and realised that Europe was more important for Turkey than Asia. And next it is destined to be European Capital of Culture in 2010.

AMD

Malcolm Kenwood on the Fine Art of Crime (March 2009)

In a clear and loud voice Mr Kenwood gave a most interesting lecture, well timed and perfectly helped by digital images. The ADFAS audience was first asked to search for resemblance between two pictures: one of a stolen antique table and one from a seemingly similar table from the catalogue of a major auction house. After a very pleasant discussion with many questions we learned what to look for and received a good tip: if we make photographs of our own art and antiques, we must show cracks and chips! We also learned about the International Art Loss Register: the world's largest private international database of lost and stolen art, antiques and collectibles that provides recovery and search services to private individuals, collectors, the art trade, insurers and law enforcement through technology and a professionally trained staff of art historians.

We can picture or (thanks to CCTV cameras) even see thieves making off in full daylight with works of art worth several million euros but it seems more film than reality when thieves break into the same house several times over. The trail of one such crime ended at Antwerp airport in September 1993.

Sir Alfred Beit bought Russborough House (County Wicklow, Ireland) in 1952 and housed his art collection there, including paintings by Goya, Vermeer, Rubens and Gainsborough. The house was robbed four times, first in 1974 by a gang including British heiress Rose Dugdale (a former debutante who rebelled against her wealthy upbringing and was arrested after a burglary at her family home, the proceeds believed destined for the IRA). The next robbery, in 1986, was carried out by a gangster called Martin Cahill (nicknamed "The General"),



Vermeer's "Lady Writing a Letter with Her Maid", c.1670

National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin

after which Sir Alfred Beit donated his collection to the National Gallery of Ireland. There were two more burglaries in 2001 and 2002. Two paintings, Gainsborough's *Madame Bacelli* and Vermeer's *Lady writing a Letter with her Maid*, the latter probably the most valuable painting of the collection, were stolen twice, although recovered each time. On the second occasion they were transferred via London and Ostend to Antwerp, where a well organized police force was able to arrest the dealers!

GDB

Invitations from other groups (2)

Our NADFAS sister group in The Hague is hosting the European premiere of a film entitled "Visible Silence: Marsden Hartley, Painter and Poet", an Essay in Film by Michael Maglaras, which is a deeply personal view of one of America's most important painters and most enigmatic artistic spirits.

Date: Thursday 2 April at 19:30 pm

Place: The American School of The Hague in Wassenaar

Cost: €12.50 per person

Information: info@dfas.nl.

DATES TO REMEMBER

19 March 2009	Directory meeting, London [If anyone has any suggestions or ideas concerning future lecture subjects, please contact Angela Dodds before 18 March]	
20 March 2009	NADFAS: Annual Mainland Europe meeting, London	
24 March 2009	NADFAS: Heritage Volunteers meeting, London	
6 April 2009	<i>Beyond the Gilded Stage: The Social and Cultural History of Opera</i> Lecturer: Daniel Snowman	Church Hall, Grétrystraat as from 7 pm Lecture at 8 pm
8 April 2009	ADFAS Committee Meeting (If you have anything you would like brought up at the Committee meeting, please get in touch with Michael Smith)	
25 April 2009	Guided tour of St.Boniface Anglican Church followed by afternoon tea	Meet in the Church Hall at 2.15 pm Tea at 3.30 pm
4 May 2009	<i>The Paintings of Hieronymus Bosch</i> Lecturer: Valerie Woodgate (preceded by the AGM]	Church Hall, Grétrystraat as from 7 pm Lecture at 8.15 pm (AGM at 8 pm)
7 May 2009	NADFAS: Annual General Meeting, London	
20 June 2009	Annual outing and lunch	Details at the April lecture
5 October 2009	<i>Collecting the Twentieth Century</i> Lecturer: Paul Atterbury	Church Hall, Grétrystraat as from 7 pm Lecture at 8 pm

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With thanks to this month's contributors:
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