

# THE NEWSLETTER

Issue No.5 – May-August 2009

## An Introduction

Dear Members,

It's the end of the season and ADFAS is on holiday. Summer is almost here and despite the unpredictable Belgian weather, the evenings are long and light and lectures are far from our mind. There is, however, one last ADFAS event for the season: our annual full day outing which this year is by coach to the Abbey at Villers-la-Ville and then to the Folon Foundation. Read more about it further on this page; it sounds an interesting and fun day, and enjoyment is guaranteed.

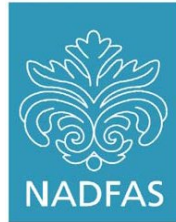
An outing; a full programme waiting for you for next season (see the last page); but all is not entirely well within ADFAS. We have members, we have lectures, outings, a comfortable meeting place, an informative Newsletter, a website for newcomers – what we do not have, dear readers, is committee members, and without committee members we cannot continue as a society for very much longer.

Any moments of your time, however few, would be gratefully accepted. Assistance at the door on a lecture evening, in writing a short occasional article for the Newsletter, producing ideas for publicity, looking after a lecturer for a morning, an afternoon or a night – anything would be of help. If you think you can assist, please let me know, I shall be very happy to hear from you.

I finish by repeating my plea from last May's Newsletter. 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



## New purchase

With the advice of Gilberte Du Bois, ADFAS has purchased a lectern for the use of lecturers. This will be seen for the first time at our opening lecture of the season in October.

Funds for the lectern came from the proceeds of the raffles we have held during the year – thank you all. The lectern has been made by a lady carpenter, Annick De Smet; during the summer it will be painted, and the letters "ADFAS" will be added. Come to the October lecture and admire it!

**Annual Outing:**  
**Villers-la-Ville +**  
**The Folon Foundation**  
**20 June 2009**

ADFAS has planned a visit, first to the Abbey at Villers-la-Ville, followed by lunch, and then to the Folon Foundation in la Hulpe, with time for a walk through the park around the Chateau de la Hulpe.

Villers-la-Ville Abbey was founded in the 12th century by monks of the Cistercian Order, with the support of Saint Bernard. At one time, over a hundred monks and three times as many lay brothers lived and worked there; but in 1796 the revolutionary French administration closed the Abbey and sold it off as a national property to a materials merchant.

Today, its majestic ruins give a marvellous idea of the life of monks in medieval times.

The visit to the Abbey will be with an English-speaking guide; after lunch at the Moulin de Villers, there will be a visit, without guide, to the Folon Museum. Jean-Michel Folon, a Belgian artist, illustrator and cartoonist who died in 2005, could not provide more of a contrast with the medieval monks of the Abbey – in other words, it will be a day with something for everyone.

**Date:** Saturday 20 June

**Meet:** 9.20 am at the Crowne Plaza then:

10.30, guided tour of the Abbey  
12.30, lunch at the Moulin de Villers  
3 pm, Folon Foundation  
6.30 pm, back in Antwerp.

**Cost:** € 50 per person, including both tours, guide and lunch

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

**Bank account:** 610-4666600-21



"Au Pays des Merveilles" by Jean-Michel Folon

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

## The April and May lectures

### **Daniel Snowman on the Social and Cultural History of Opera** (April 2009)

A very good speaker, an interesting subject, although perhaps too vast for one lecture.

The big questions: why is opera so popular? Has it always been like that? Do people really like opera music, or do they like the stories, the drama, and theatrical aspects such as décors, costumes and stage effects? After having posed all these questions Mr Snowman told us how he, as a child, came to like opera: it was the pure power of emotion.

The most popular operatic works only date from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In that period opera houses were built like temples for the great singers. Opera is not an art form that has always existed. It finds its origins in the Renaissance, trying to recreate the theatre plays of the ancient world. The first operas, such as Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, were commissioned by important courts to put on a big show! Only the invited few heard and watched the opera. It was the same in France at the Court of Louis XIV in Versailles (around 1650) with the operas by J.B. Lully.

In London the same: around 1650 the House of Hanover enjoyed music written by Handel. He composed opera music with Italian words. Although his work was performed in a public theatre (the Haymarket Theatre), still most people didn't go to the opera. They didn't like the music nor all these dramas about gods! But by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century commercial theatres had opened. They would perform more popular musical theatre with spoken dialogues like the German Singspiel (*Don Giovanni*, *The Magic Flute*), later the 19<sup>th</sup> century Viennese and Parisian operettas and in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the musical. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Romantic Movement brought about a resurgence of the past. Think of the historic operas by Donizetti, Rossini etc. The industrial development brought new groups of people to the opera: merchants, industrialists and bankers. Going to the opera became a social event, but it continued to be political: think the Italian independence uprising against the

Austrians (Viva Verdi!) or of the Belgian one against the Dutch in 1830 (*La muette de Portici* by Auber).

The 19<sup>th</sup> century finally brings OPERA closer to more middle class people due to new techniques: photography, press and music publishing houses. When by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Italians emigrated in big numbers to the New World, they took opera to the Americas. In New York and elsewhere, the new millionaires paid for culture, building opera houses and concert halls. Even in Manaus on the Amazon!

From then on, new technology like film and radio brought opera to the millions. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the political power of opera was still used by dictators such as Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini. After WWII the record industry, and nowadays the DVD, help to democratize opera. But as relatively few new opera works are composed, the question now is: will opera become a Museum Art, reproducing works from the past, or will it move to a new area, using new forms of multimedia and continuing to attempt to incorporate all the arts in one?



*The Opera House at Manaus, Brazil*  
GDB

### **Valerie Woodgate on Hieronymus Bosch** (May 2009)

A very interesting lecture on a painter about whom I knew very little and whose paintings were but enigmas to me. A contemporary of Leonardo da Vinci, Hieronymus Bosch was as different from Leonardo as possible. He is thought to have been born in 1453 into a painter's family (father and grandfather Van Aken both were

members of the painter's guild). The name Bosch came from the city in which he lived and worked: 's Hertogenbosch. He married into a bourgeois family, had no children and died in 1516.

Mrs Woodgate, while showing us a painting believed to be his self portrait, situated Bosch in a period of great upheaval that was haunted by fear. Fear of public burnings of witches, fear of burning cities, fear of big syphilis epidemics, fear of the year 1500, which could have been the end of the world and the Day of the Last Judgement. Bosch didn't paint the conventional Christian subjects, because he was haunted by preaching he had heard of immense cruelty, no forgiveness but detailed punishments for each of the sins. These words he designed and that's how he came to paint what he did.

Today the largest number of paintings by Hieronymus Bosch is in the Prado in Madrid. Our lecturer gave us a guided tour through many of his works. We looked in detail at *The Cure of Folly* (cut open the head and cut out the stone, monk and nun looking at the scenery amid a beautiful landscape); *Christ Carrying the Cross* (the head of Christ surrounded by ugly people); *Death and the Miser*, *The Haywain Triptych* with on its exterior the Path of Life, and in the central panel hundreds of figures engaged in a variety of sins; *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, a triptych depicting several Biblical scenes. This last painting reveals Bosch at the height of his power.

The lecture ended with a very interesting question time which confirmed Mrs Woodgate's knowledge on the subject.

GDB



*Part of "Christ Carrying the Cross" (1490) by Hieronymus Bosch Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent*

## Other items of interest

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

### **Visit to St. Boniface Church**

On Saturday 25 April, a group of ADFAS members and friends met in St. Boniface Church and, after hearing from our guide, John Dashwood, a short history first of the development of the Anglican Church and then of what was originally called, in the 16th century, the English Church in Antwerp, enjoyed a guided tour of the building. Most noteworthy are the windows, each of which we looked at closely (not always possible when attending a service). All but one were paid for and put up by, or in memory of, individuals who were at one time members of the congregation, the last being a window dedicated only in 2007 to commemorate the safe crossing of the North Sea in a small boat by Mr Freddy Vas Nunes during WWII. Also notable are the relics from other Anglican buildings which no longer exist – stone memorials from the old Mission to Seafarers premises in the Van Schoonbekeplein, and plaques and a stained glass window from St. Barbara's chapel at the British forces headquarters in Emblem which closed when the army left several years ago.

The second half of the afternoon was equally enjoyable – a full English tea made and served by the Ladies of the Church Guild. Sandwiches (with their crusts cut off – of course), buttered banana bread, scones (and thick cream and jam), strawberry tarts and several different cakes – all not only impressive to see laid out waiting for us, but absolutely delicious to eat. How many of us needed any supper that evening, I wonder?

I think we all, at future lecture evenings, will have a greater understanding of the building where we find ourselves. More information on the church, its history and the current centenary appeal for essential repairs can be found on the church's website: [www.boniface.be](http://www.boniface.be).

### **Two new museums in Belgium**

#### **1. The Magritte Museum, Brussels**

The Musée Magritte Museum opens to the public on Tuesday 2 June, at 3 Regenschapstraat, Brussels. It will house the greatest collection by René

Magritte ever seen, 170 works and archive material, and as with all museums today, there will be a shop, a library and a study centre. The museum's three levels are in chronological order and will show first, the period "from the beginning until 1929", then from 1930-1950, and finally the period 1950-1967. Of course many of Magritte's most famous paintings are elsewhere; the new museum has been created to show to better advantage those that were already in the possession of the KMSKB, the Royal Fine Arts Museum of Belgium, together with some that have been loaned from private collections. But it will be a perfect place for those who want to know more about Magritte, about his life and how his painting and his ideas developed.

[www.musee-magritte-museum.be](http://www.musee-magritte-museum.be)  
[www.fine-arts-museum.be](http://www.fine-arts-museum.be)

#### **2. The Mu.Zee, Ostend**

The Kunstmuseum aan Zee, known, of course, as MuZee, opened its doors in March in a former department store at Romestraat 11, Ostend, and it presently forms the Inside part of the three-yearly sculpture exhibition at the coast, Beaufort03, which is split into Beaufort Inside and Beaufort Outside. Mu.Zee brings together the collection of mainly 19th century works owned by the city of Ostend, previously housed in the Museum of Fine Arts, and the more modern collection owned by the Province of West Flanders. Ostend's two most famous artists, James Ensor and Léon Spilliaert, are well represented, and as part of Beaufort 03 there is currently a photographic exhibition showing Ensor, Delvaux, Permeke, Grard and others at play, just like any other seaside tourists.

[www.kunstmuseumaanzee.be](http://www.kunstmuseumaanzee.be)

PS. This year's Museum Prize in Flanders has been awarded to the Museum of Fine Arts in Ghent, which re-opened two years ago after a four-year renovation period. The jury praised the museum's many technical innovations, especially those that aid accessibility.

The similar Museum Prize in Wallonia went to the Photography Museum in Charleroi.

### **Digital or slides?**

At our last lecture in May, one of the survey forms returned at the end of the evening contained the comment: "Digital would have been better". This seems the moment to explain the situation within NADFAS, and more particularly as far as ADFAS is concerned, with respect to digital presentations.

Digital projectors for lectures are still very new. More and more lecturers are turning to them, but it is not as simple as putting away the slides and getting out the projector. Lecturers have over the years built up a collection, often a very large one, of suitable slides and each one of these has to be scanned for use in digital format. That takes time and money. Next, the lecturer has to purchase a laptop and a digital projector, which are expensive pieces of equipment. Some lecturers are not experienced in digital presentations nor are they yet prepared to spend this amount of money.

Societies, including ADFAS, are also faced with the need to purchase new equipment; so far we have been lucky in that each lecturer who has made a digital presentation to us has brought his or her own equipment, but this is not always the case in the UK, and many groups are now investing in digital projectors of their own. We at ADFAS will very soon have to make a decision: to buy or not to buy, and if we do decide to buy, we will use up some of our very limited, and precious, reserve funds. A fairy godmother with a magic wand would be very welcome, but we haven't yet found one.

NADFAS has said that the time may come when lecturers who cannot give digital presentations will be asked to retire; until that day, we will continue to have the situation that we had in May, when our sister societies in The Hague and Brussels saw digital presentations while we in Antwerp had a lecture accompanied by old-fashioned slides.

As soon as the situation changes, either for ADFAS or due to a NADFAS decision, we will let you know.

Angela Dodds

## DATES TO REMEMBER

20 June 2009	Annual outing: Villers-la-Ville Abbey, lunch and the Folon Foundation at La Hulpe	Meet at the Crowne Plaza Hotel at 9.20 am, return by 6.30 pm
2 September 2009	ADFAS Committee Meeting (If you have anything you would like brought up at the Committee meeting, please get in touch with Michael Smith)	
5 October 2009	Collecting the Twentieth Century Lecturer: Paul Atterbury	Church Hall, Grétrystraat as from 7 pm Lecture at 8 pm
2 November 2009	Royal Scandals through the Ages Lecturer: Dr Kate Williams	Church Hall, Grétrystraat as from 7 pm Lecture at 8 pm
7 December 2009	The Ego Adorned, A Fascinating Story Lecturer: Jennie Baeten (by kind permission of the Antwerp World Diamond Centre)	Church Hall, Grétrystraat as from 7 pm Lecture at 8 pm
11 January 2010	The Art of the Panorama and the Cyclorama Lecturer: Professor Ian Beckett	Church Hall, Grétrystraat as from 7 pm Lecture at 8 pm
1 February 2010	Houses and Gardens of Normandy Lecturer: Helen McCabe	Church Hall, Grétrystraat as from 7 pm Lecture at 8 pm
1 March 2010	The Splendours of North Africa: Roman and Islamic Art of Libya, Tunisia and Morocco Lecturer: Christopher Bradley	Church Hall, Grétrystraat as from 7 pm Lecture at 8 pm
12 April 2010	History of the Long Case Clock Lecturer: Dr Colin Lattimore	Church Hall, Grétrystraat as from 7 pm Lecture at 8 pm
10 May 2010	Ocean Liner Art: Ships that Shaped our Lives 1800-1950 Lecturer: James Taylor	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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