

EDINBURGH DECORATIVE & FINE ARTS SOCIETY

President: The Countess of Rosebery

PROGRAMME 2020-2021

Tuesday 8 September 2020

Linda Smith: *William Hogarth 1697 - 1764*

Hogarth is nowadays mostly remembered as a talented satirist, but there is much more to him than that. He was extremely ambitious in other artistic fields, including portraiture, history painting, and art theory. He was also a tireless self-promoter and entrepreneur, with a real and practical concern for the status of his profession. This talk tracks his career from humble copperplate engraver to successful painter, showing a wide variety of images which demonstrate his exceptional originality and inventiveness. Above all, however, it is his unparalleled eye for absurdity and human weakness which not only tells us so much about his times but gives us food for thought about our own.



Rococo Silver 1727-1765



Tuesday 10 October 2020

Ralph Hoyle: *Mid Eighteenth Century Silver: Rococo Silver, its social context, and the adventures of its owners and makers*

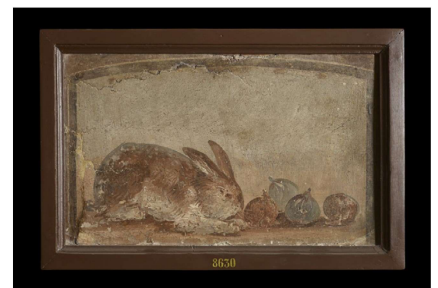
Ralph's interest is mid eighteenth-century English silver. He is fascinated by the Huguenot influence, where new silversmithing techniques fused with new designs, and he explains methods of manufacture, interpreting the engraved heraldry of the items and the social context.

He uncovers the original owners by tracing the heraldry, shows portraits of them, and reveals some of their life stories.

Tuesday 10 November 2020

Paul Roberts: *Last Supper in Pompeii*

For the Romans, life meant getting together to eat and drink, in a pub or at a banquet. This talk celebrates the Roman love affair with food and drink - a journey, from fields and vineyards to markets and shops, from tables to toilets and the tomb. We see the influence of the Greeks and mysterious Etruscans, and visit fertile Vesuvius to see how Romans got their food and drink (and a Roman vineyard buried in AD79). Into the bustling city, past hawkers, shops and bars we enter the house, visit the shrine of the gods (with a chicken head!) and the gorgeous garden with its flowers and fountains. We recline in the dining room, with exotic food and fine wine, and surrounded by Greek-style luxury – fine silver, mosaics and frescoes. We look at how Roman ideas and customs on food caught on in Roman Britain. Along with Roman gods of fertility and wine, come exotic imports like pepper, figs and finest fish sauce. Death comes as the end and we come face to face with the resin lady, a real inhabitant of Pompeii who died in the eruption, but we finish with the convivial afterlife she would have hoped for.



Tuesday 8 December 2020

Chantal Brotherton-Ratcliffe: *Artemisia Gentileschi: Daughter of Rome, Painter of Europe*

What skills did it take for a woman to become a painter in 17th c Europe? Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-1654) was by no means the only woman painter of her period, but she is a rarity, and she also ranks amongst the greatest painters of the 17th century. Her career spanned a time of great change in Italian taste, from the power and earthiness of Caravaggio, to the more elegant classicism of Reni and Domenichino. Her family connections meant that she moved between several different centres in Europe - Rome, Florence, Naples and London, and her work reflects the different tastes of these centres.



Tuesday 12 January 2021

Susan Whitfield: *The Empress Josephine and Artists of her Time*

Napoleon's Empress, Joséphine de Beauharnais, was a passionate gardener, book collector, patron and art collector. Her reputation in France and abroad for generosity, charm and gentleness of manner was of enormous value to Napoleon as a feminine counterpart to the otherwise military and legalistic tenor of his regime. Countless contemporaries emphasised her sensitivity and her genuine interest in the visual arts – often no doubt in part as a contrast to her husband. The range of her cultural activities included her acquisition of a large and distinguished collection of pictures, including by far the most important group of works by an entirely new school of painting, the troubadour pictures of beautifully crafted historical scenes. Indeed, among female royal collectors her only superior is the incomparable Catherine the Great.

Tuesday 9 February 2021

Malcolm Jones: *From Restoration to Reformation: Theatre from Charles II to David Garrick*

Theatres had been officially closed for 18 years under the Puritan Government when Charles II returned to England and re-opened the playhouses. Restoration Theatre reflected the explosion of immorality and freedom associated with the restoration. Fun though it was, Theatre became ill-disciplined and a place respectable people would not go. Over the next 100 years actors and managers like David Garrick sought to create a professional and artistically respected art form.



Tuesday 9 March 2021

Mary Rose Rivett-Carnac: *Faces, Figures and Forms: Exploring Sculpture in the UK's Public Art Collections.*

Sculpture has the power to stop us in our tracks. It can be awe inspiring, thought provoking or fun and amusing. Many sculptures are imbued with historical and cultural reference; statues, for example, representing remarkable men and women of the past. Modern sculpture sees the world from different perspectives that may be perplexing or enlightening. The UK's national collection of sculpture is arguably the finest in the world and is being catalogued in a unique and ambitious project called Art UK (www.artuk.org). The lecture explores a range of works from across the country and recounts some of the fascinating stories behind them.

Tuesday 13 April 2021

Dan Evans: *Still Loving Still Life: cabbages, carrots and lamb. Spanish Still Life from 1600 -1812*

Robert Hughes wrote of still life painting; 'Still Life is to eating what the nude is to sex', although he did admit that Spanish Still Life painting is 'more sacramental than gastronomic'. Goya's painting of a pile of six silvery fish is a political commentary on the disasters of war. These bream have been abandoned on a beach in the middle of the night, left to rot in the sand, evidence of reckless waste at a time of famine. Through this and others paintings by Velazquez, Zurbarán, and Meléndez, several stunning key themes are explored that can all be discerned from arrangements of simple food stuffs: religious fervour and symbolism, the absence of presence and that importance generates waste.



Tuesday 11 May 2021

Hilary Williams: *The Frick Collection, New York: a Feast for the Eyes*

The Frick Collection, New York, is one of the finest-quality museums in the world. It belongs largely to the Gilded Age of American connoisseurship of the early years of the 20th century and is a testament to the taste of its founder, steel magnate, Henry Clay Frick. He died on the eve of WWI after being able to collect some of the best pieces available in Europe and America. His agents were very effective and the result is a first rate collection of fine French furniture, enamels, porcelain, paintings by Bellini, Van Eyck, Holbein, Titian, Rembrandt, Vermeer, Van Dyck, Rubens, El Greco, Velázquez, Fragonard, Ingres, Renoir, JMW Turner, Constable, Whistler and many others. These are all set within an outstanding mansion in Manhattan.

Tuesday 8 June 2021

To be confirmed
