

ART APPRECIATION 2023

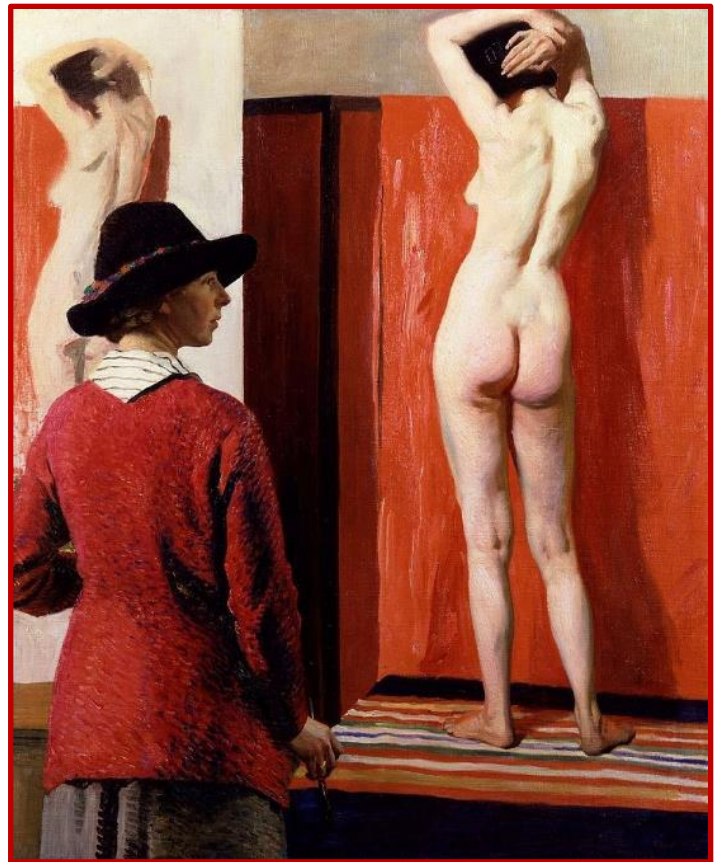
January 2023: REGIONAL ARTISTS

We began by looking at the work of a group called the Scottish Colourists. The group were painting around the 1920s, and although not a defined group, they became known jointly by this title.

Their main painters in the group were Samuel Peploe, John Ferguson, Leslie Hunter and Francis Cadell. They had all visited Paris from the 1890s onwards, and were very influenced by Cezanne, Matisse and the Fauves. Although their styles varied they were united in their use of vibrant colour.

We then discussed the work of Laura Knight, a local artist that began by attending Nottingham School of Art at the age of thirteen, and went on to exhibit at the Royal Academy and become a Dame.

One of her most famous paintings *Self Portrait with Nude*, painted in 1913, was thought controversial for its subject matter of a female artist painting a nude life model.



The next group we looked at was The Glasgow Girls, painting from around 1880 to 1920. They were based in the city of Glasgow, where they all trained at the school of art. The most famous of the group was Margaret Macdonald, whose Art Nouveau designs became one of the defining features of the Glasgow Style.

The final groups we looked at were the Staithes group and the Newlyn group, two artistic colonies that existed simultaneously in the communities from which they took their names. A theme that tied these two groups was that they were both influenced by the Impressionist movement that they imported from France, and both brought a strong element of realism into their work through recording the work of the fishermen and their families. Another connection was that Laura Knight worked and lived for long periods of time in both seaside communities.

March 2023: EASTER

This month we chose as our subject artists those that have portrayed a scene from the Easter story. Most of us chose paintings with a religious content. One member though decided to approach the subject from the angle of eggs. She chose a work by Salvador Dali, entitled *Egg Sunray*. Apparently Dali had an obsession with the symbolism of eggs and often used their image in his paintings,

The majority of the presentations though were on the religious theme. We looked at the paintings chronologically, so we started with an early Renaissance artist called Giotto, who took art from the stylisation of the medieval period to a new naturalism. We then went through the paintings of Caravaggio and other High Renaissance painters.

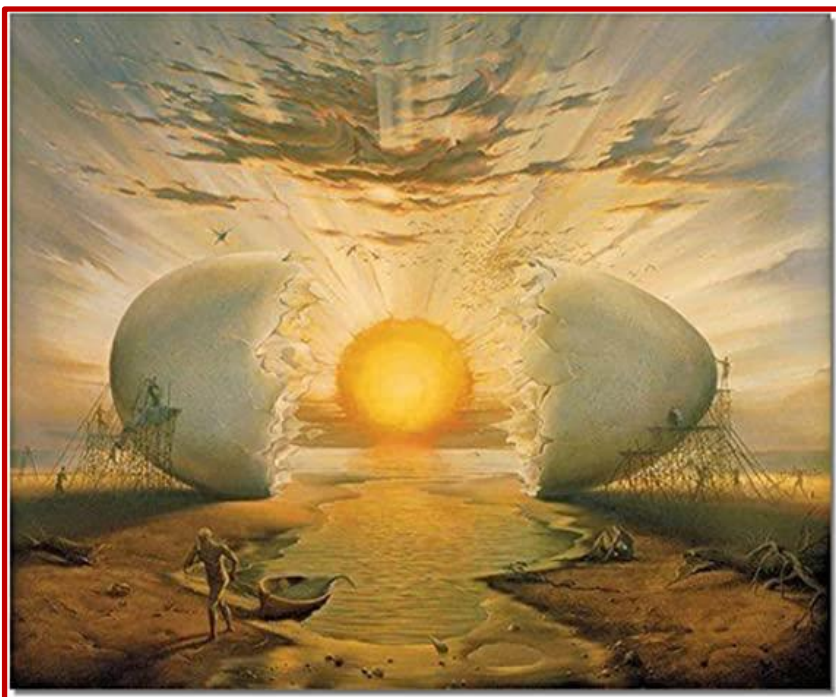
From there we moved to the nineteenth century with a painting by Antonio Ciseri with a literal interpretation of the scene where Christ is presented by Pilate to the crowd. For the twentieth century we looked at a painting from 1938 by Mark Chagall which was full with Jewish symbolism and condemnation of war. There was also had a painting by Emil Nolde, a German Expressionist painter, whose distorted figures and lurid colours made a startling statement about the suffering of Christ.

To bring us up to date we looked at a powerful picture by Banksy, in which Christ was seen being crucified on the alter of commercialism. And finally we had an artist who is working today called Peter Clare, who only paints religious paintings. His style however was to revert partly back to a medieval style very reminiscent of the art of stained glass.

We try as a group to choose topics that allow all members to do some investigation into the subject and participate in the subsequent discussion. Our next topic is going to be political satire in art. This has been inspired by the exhibition now showing in Derby on the artist Hogarth, and we have extended the subject matter to other artists who produced satirical pieces Do join us if you are interested in the subject of art history.



Caravaggio



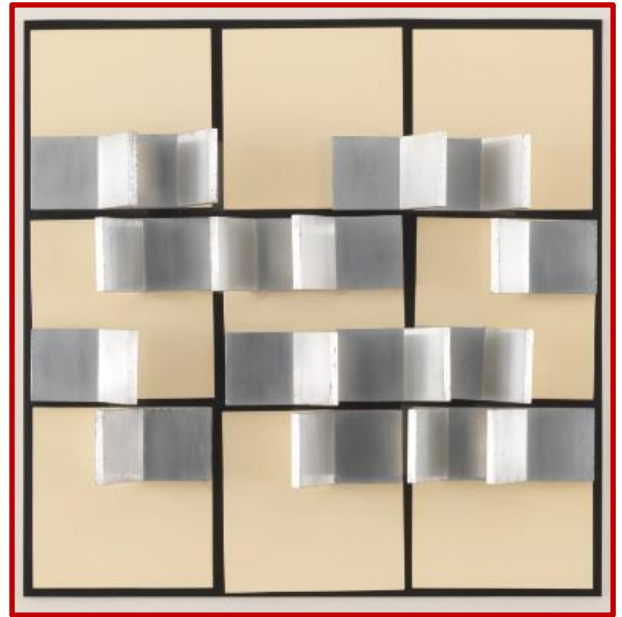
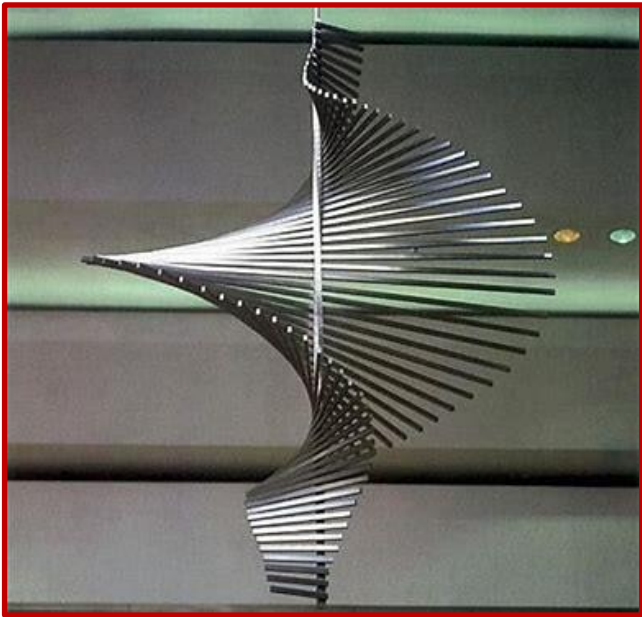
Dali

June 2023: RHYTHM AND GEOMETRY

This month we looked at the Constructivist movement. The motivation for this was an exhibition showing at the Djanogly art gallery, called *Rhythm and Geometry, Constructivist art in Britain since 1951*.

The exhibition contains work by major artists including Kenneth Martin, Mary Martin and Victor Pasmore. What the exhibition does not show is the origins of the movement, which was started in Russia in the post revolution period.

British artists were very influenced by the work of people such as Vladimir Tatlin and Naum Gabo. Below are images of two of the pieces on exhibition at the Djanogly. The Spiral is by Kenneth Martin and the wooden board construction is by Mary Martin.



September 2023: SURREALISM IN ART

Each member of the group selected an artist that was part of the Surrealist movement and illustrated their talk with examples of their work.

The founder of the group was Andre Breton, who was an artist, writer and theorist. Breton was very interested in the work of the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, famous for his belief that human behaviour is driven by our childhood experiences of love, loss and sexuality. Freud used his technique of dream analysis as a form of therapy for his patients.

Breton also became very interested in the subject of the unconscious mind, but rather as a means of unlocking deep emotions and thoughts, which artists then used as a source for the subject matter of their paintings.

It was very clear when we looked at the paintings done by various artists associated with the group that this was in fact what they did. The most famous of the group was Salvador Dali, a Spanish painter, whose most famous work is *The Persistence of Memory*. Another well known painter that followed this philosophy was Rene Magritte, a Belgian artist known for depicting familiar objects in unexpected contexts.

Although Surrealism is known as an art movement its influence was very diverse. It influenced cinema, photography and literature. The common element in Surrealism is the incongruity of objects and ideas, and a disturbing feeling of removal from reality.



Dali



Magritte

October 2023: AUTUMN

The subject for our October meeting was autumn itself. When we looked at the many images it was obvious that the season was an inspirational subject for many artists. The sheer beauty of the countryside at this time of year meant it was a gift to a landscape painter. There are so many examples of autumn landscapes that it is difficult to select any in particular, but we looked at Thomas Gainsborough's *Woodland Landscape with a Peasant Resting* (1747) as an example of a picturesque scene, and Nicholas Poussin's *Autumn* (1660).

We looked at images of autumn that portrayed it as a season of abundance, a common theme that runs through many traditional paintings, but also the antithesis of this as a metaphor for death and decline.

An example of this is John Millet's *Autumn Leaves*, where the autumnal bonfire suggests the transience of youth and beauty.



A further traditional autumnal subject was that of its significance at the time of harvest. We looked at the Japanese artist Hokusai's portrayal of a traditional agricultural scene and at Bruegel's *The Harvesters* (1565). Both paintings show peasants working together in a way which was universal in rural communities.

November 2023: HISTORY OF LANDSCAPE PAINTING

We started what is to be a double meeting on the subject of the History of Landscape painting. We started with early wall paintings of Minoan and later, Roman frescoes. We tried to identify what exactly qualifies as a landscape painting. Is it when the scene is purely rural, or can it still be classed as a landscape when it is mainly a background for a narrative painting.

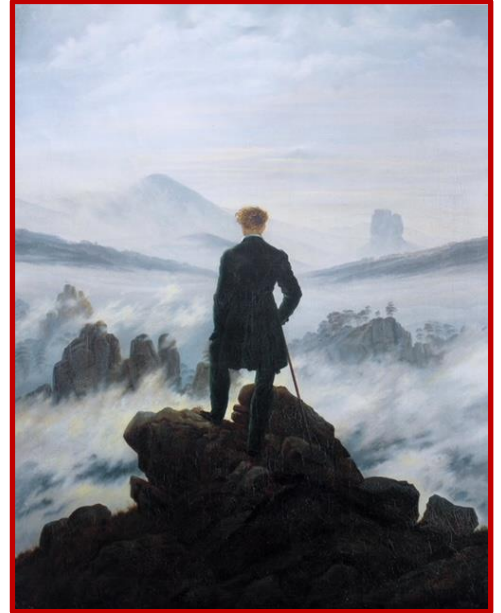
After considering the art of early civilisations we looked at 15th Century Venice. This included Giovanni Bellini and Giorgione. And from there we looked at the work of Nicholas Poussin and Claude Lorraine, two artists that introduced Classical landscape painting, and were very influential.

All of the artists we studied up to this point were European. For our next meeting we will include the English Romantic painters, such as Constable and Turner. We will then go up to the 19th century and the American Hudson River School.

We plan to continue the topic after the new year and bring the topic up to the 21st century.



Poussin Landscape with Man Washing his feet at a Fountain



**Caspar Friedrich:
Wanderer Above a Sea of Fog**

December 2023: LANDSCAPE IN ART

In December the group continued our theme of Landscape in Art. We began with art from 18th century France, with the artists Watteau, Boucher and Fragonard. We discussed how the art of the period reflected the politics. Society was led by an indulgent and frivolous aristocracy, which led at the end of the century to their overthrow due to the French Revolution.

Following this we went on to discuss the Romantic movement in England and Germany. Turner and Constable were the chief landscape painters of their time in England, while in Germany Casper David Friedrich was the best known Painters of this period looked to nature for their inspiration and consequently landscape became a major genre of the time.



Fragonard



The White Horse by Constable

We then looked at the Barbizon school of painting in France. These painters were working around 1860, one of the main members being John Millet. Millet combined a romantic notion of the landscape together with a realistic representation of the hard work the peasants had to endure.

We shall continue in January with the history of landscape painting, starting with the French Impressionist movement and going through to the German Expressionists of the early 1900s.