



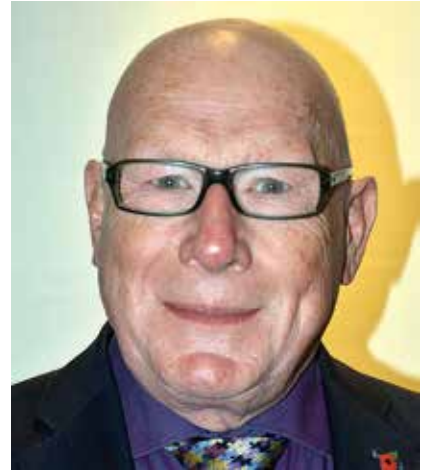
THE ARTS
SOCIETY
FYLDE

In the Picture

Newsletter #27 / Autumn 2023

Letter from our Chair

Once again it is my pleasure to introduce the newsletter for autumn 2023. Since I last wrote The Arts Society Fylde has completed the programme of lectures for 2022/2023 and we have, once again, been privileged to hear some excellent speakers deliver an eclectic range of lectures. All our lecturers are accredited by an Arts Society panel; if they do not pass this process we would choose not to engage their services. The standard of our programme is the bedrock on which our Society exists and Denise Malpas now has a good team of Society members to assist her in the selection process, and I extend my thanks to them all.



We enjoyed an excellent Study Day, led by David Rosier, on Chinese Imperial Court costume and insignia of rank, which proved very interesting. The day was enhanced by the examples on display that David had collected over a long period. We look forward to another Study Day in November, when Brian Healey, always a popular speaker, will concentrate on Scandinavian culture.

In addition, at the end of June, Jean Holland organised a lovely day trip to Port Sunlight to visit the Lady Lever Art Gallery and Museum, and to tour the village itself. She and her team have also held two very successful Coffee Mornings. These have now become a regular social feature of the Society and are well supported.

At the end of the 2022/2023 season we can look back at a period when the Society and its members returned to some form of normality. We have slowly increased our membership, which took such a toll as a result of the pandemic. We have also attracted a large numbers of visitors to our lectures. Once again, the Lowther management and its team of volunteers have helped us in what we are trying to achieve.

I end by thanking The Arts Society Fylde Committee for their continued help and support in running the Society. We have welcomed Tony Depledge and Tony Berwick as new members of the team, and their input is already proving a great help. Please consider joining us. And also, please continue to encourage your friends and neighbours to attend our lectures. The best way of recruiting new members has always been by recommendation. In conclusion, I send my very best wishes and thanks to you all.

Nigel Bramley-Haworth
Chair, The Arts Society Fylde

Dates for your diary

Please note that we sometimes have to make changes to our programme. Please see our website at www.theartssocietyfylde.org.uk for the latest news on all upcoming lectures and events.



WED 4TH OCT 2023

The Art of Art Deco

Pamela Campbell-Johnston

Will review the development of the style within the context of its social and economic environment and look at specific examples of objets d'arts, including silver, jewellery, furniture, ceramics, clocks and architecture.



FRI 17TH NOV 2023

Masters of the North

Brian Healey

Study Day at Fylde Rugby Club. Three lectures will highlight art, architecture and music in Scandinavia.

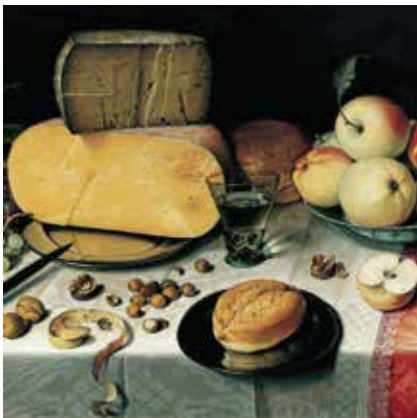


WED 6TH MAR 2024

Grace Darling & the Fine Art of Saving Lives at Sea

James Taylor

We will discover the artistic contribution that has helped to keep Grace Darling in the public eye and how she became the 'poster girl' of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution – she was the first woman awarded their medal for gallantry. This talk coincides with commemorations to mark the 200th anniversary of the founding of the RNLI in 1824.



WED 1ST NOV 2023

Food in Paintings: A Tasting Menu

Cindy Polemis

There's a lot more to food paintings than meets the eye and this lecture will present a veritable tasting menu for you to unravel the meaning of these images. AGM will be held at 1.00 pm.



WED 7TH FEB 2024

'Debo' - Mitford, Cavendish, Devonshire Duchess, Housewife 1920 – 2014

Simon Seligman

Debo had a lasting impact not just on Chatsworth but on everything she touched and everyone she met; this lecture pays tribute to an astonishing life.



Tin seated terrier dog weathervane

Art, photography and architecture at Compton Verney

By Fiona Walmsley-Collins

I have been wanting to visit the private art gallery Compton Verney following the move of the *British Folk Art Collection* to the gallery from its previous home in Bath in the late 1990s, and since the re-hung/re-imagined display of the exhibits by the artist Mark Heard in March 2018.

It took a prompt from *The Arts Society Magazine*, summer 2022, to get motivated and into action. I read there was also an exhibition of Magnum Photographers, entitled *Where Ideas Are Born*. It was an exhibition of over 20 photographers from the Magnum agency, capturing some of the most significant artists of the 20th century in their creative/working environments. My husband Michael is a working artist so I was interested to see the environments that well known artists work/worked in.

We went down to Warwickshire on a beautiful, bright sunny October Saturday afternoon and the weather stayed with us for Sunday, so we were up and at the gallery as it opened. The Park as it stands is the

result of an on-going restoration project to restore the landscape to the one that Lancelot 'Capability' Brown designed in 1768. It was a beautiful morning to walk through the grounds in the October sunshine.

We decided to start our visit with the *British Folk Art Collection*, currently sited on the top floor and work our way down the various floors of the gallery. For anyone who enjoys Folk Art, the *British Collection* is fantastic and includes: textiles - seascape embroideries by sailors; vernacular furniture; paintings - landscapes, interiors, portraits - animals and people; automated models; weathervanes, whirligigs and shop signs. Being a 'dog' person, one of my favourite exhibits was the tin 'seated terrier dog' weathervane (circa 1800), probably made by a blacksmith. Unusually, the dog is facing backwards, its tail is at the point - the front of the weathervane - and its head is at the sail, where the wind catches.



'New Chapel', designed by 'Capability' Brown

We wandered through the Marx - Lambert collection which was formed by the artist Enid Marx (1902- 98) and historian Margaret Lambert (1906-95), who are described on Compton Verney's webpage as they *"together shared a love of English popular art. Writing several books on the subject, they defined their interest in 'the art which ordinary people have, from time immemorial, introduced into their lives, sometimes making it themselves, at others imposing their tastes on the product of the craftsmen or of the machine'."* Their collection features ceramics, glassware, corn dollies, canal ware, and paper mache figures. We then headed to the lower floor for the photography exhibition.

The photography exhibition was really interesting and gave an insight into how the artists work/worked in their creative spaces. It was presented in a 'classic' art gallery format; black and white photographs, all framed in black, all in the same format, hung on white walls, all neatly hung next to each other. Among the photographers were Martin Parr and Inge Morath and those photographed included: Andy Warhol, Frida Kahlo, Picasso, Yayoi Kusama and one of my favourite painters Frank Auerbach. The Auerbach portrait showed the painter looking at himself through a mirror. The accompanying text suggested that there was so much paint on the floor of his studio you could have scraped it up and made another painting. (What a great and sumptuous idea, if like me you are an Auerbach fan.) Sadly, we were not allowed to take photographs of the exhibition.

We visited the rest of the collections which included; British Portraits, the Chinese and Naples (1600 – 1800) collections, before visiting the Adam entrance hall and 'Capability' Brown's 'New Chapel' (Grade 1 listed). The Adam Hall (circa 1761 or after) showed all his features of neoclassic decoration and the hall was truly impressive as it was completely empty of any other decoration, paintings or furniture. (The Hall was altered in the 19th century by the architects Henry Hakewell and John Gibson.)

After lunch we visited the 'New Chapel' It is truly a beautiful building. 'Capability' Brown replaced the original 'old' chapel with the 'New Chapel'. It was begun in 1776 and completed in 1780. It is a plain, Palladian-style design, built for a total cost of £981 10s 4d. Today, it stands as a rare example of a building designed by 'Capability' Brown. It has undergone a three-year restoration project, which was completed in the summer of 2016 in celebration of the 300th anniversary of the birth of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown.

The whole weekend and visit was great. The weather, art, photography and architecture were all at their best, with good food from the gallery restaurant and a 'Midlands' curry the evening before. Perfect.



"The English" by Martin Parr, Avenham Park, Preston

Enjoy the Show – Preston’s outdoor photography festival

By Pam Foster

Preston was host to what was claimed to be the ‘UK’s biggest outdoor photography festival’ this summer. It was part of the *Enjoy The Show* festival, which aims to bring art, exhibitions, performance, comedy and theatre to new audiences. Works from several internationally-acclaimed photographers, including: Martin Parr, Jenny Lewis, Maryam Wahid, Ian Beesley, Dougie Wallace, Serena Dzenis, Bobby Beasley, Tim Hetherington and Sarah Maple, formed part of 13 sets of works that were displayed in urban sites and parks across the city.

The works included a diverse range of images covering very different subjects, some portraying everyday street life, others significant events such as the Afghan war. Surreal Icelandic landscapes were featured, as well as works focusing on the identity of British Pakistani Muslim women – and much more - all displayed against an urban or parkland backdrop, including Avenham Park, Winckley Square, the old BHS site and Preston’s iconic bus station, with many of the backgrounds adding further drama to the works themselves.

Standing at almost four meters high, one of the works, *The Electrician*, by Boris Eldagsen, described as the ‘world’s most famous and controversial AI image’ attracted a lot of attention. Amongst much controversy *The Electrician* won the creative category of the Sony World Photography Awards in April 2023. Its creator Boris Eldagsen refused the award, believing that AI-generated images are not photography and should not compete with photographs. The debate that AI will either enhance or kill professional photography is one that is sure to divide the photographic community for some time.

An engagement programme provided opportunities for local people to take part in the festival, either by taking photographs or by being photographed. Locals were also encouraged to make placards with their own photos and take part in ‘photo demo’ walks through the streets of Preston.

Organiser Garry Cook is to be congratulated for organising this unique and imaginative outdoor exhibition. He intends to build on it and said: “The festival, unique in its scale and outdoor focus in the UK, offers Preston an opportunity to be truly unique in arts and culture. There’s still work to do but if I can get more people on board in the next few years I think Preston can finally stand up for itself as the vibrant thriving risk-taking cultural hub it wants to be.”



The Electrician, by Boris Eldagsen, Sykes Street Car park, Preston. Photo by Garry Cook



Giant inflatable wonderland of dots

By Pam Foster

Inviting 94 year old Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama to inaugurate Manchester's new £210m Aviva Studios, or Factory International as it is more commonly known, with her exhibition, *You, Me & The Balloons*, was a shrewd move by the Manchester International Festival organisers. The size and scale of Kusama's exhibition provided an ideal opportunity to showcase this vast new cultural space that is housed in the Castlefield area of Manchester.

Over 30 years of the artist's inflatable artworks were exhibited together, for the first time, in the Warehouse, an immense industrial space. Kusama is renowned for her surreal world of dots and pumpkins, and this exhibition featured many spectacular, purple curling tentacles, giant dolls and dogs, a huge orange pumpkin, and dozens of polka

dot red balls and spheres hanging from the ceiling. High above the exhibits was a screen showing Kusama repeatedly singing, the monotonous '*Song of a Manhattan Suicide Addict*' which added to the surrealism.

Wandering through this psychedelic maze was a childlike, fun and surreal experience - and sometimes rather nightmarish. There were clouds to sit or lie back on to gaze around the vast space. The whole experience - the scale and size of both the artworks and the exhibition space - was staggering. At last, the North West has a space to rival the Tate's Turbine Hall. Hopefully, we can look forward to Factory International hosting exhibitions that were previously prohibited because of their size.



History, art and fairies in Port Sunlight

By Jean Holland

Over 30 members enjoyed a day excursion to Port Sunlight in June. Apart from an unfortunate motorway closure on the way home, all went well and more or less as planned. The day included a coach tour of Port Sunlight with our own guide. We also took in the award winning museum, the Worker's Cottage and the new exhibition at the Soap Works. The day and tour were enhanced by our very pleasant and patient driver, Vicki, and her sense of humour.

Apart from its superb permanent collection, the Lady Lever Gallery offered us an exhibition of exquisite Flower Fairy paintings by Cicely Mary Barker which were delightful.





Coffee Mornings still proving popular

By Jean Holland

We held two of our popular Coffee Mornings in the spring and summer.

Over 50 members attended the Easter Coffee Morning at Fylde Rugby Club in March. Alan Ridgway gave us a talk on growing up in the world of entertainment as a professional child actor from the age of 12. His journey over five years introduced us to many famous names and aspects of the profession. It was quite a journey, taking in the ups and downs of a child actor, from his time in the original cast of *Oliver* to being in the very first National Theatre Company under Olivier. Alan has worked with Ron Moody, Sarah Miles, Dame Maggie Smith, Peter O'Toole, Lord Olivier, Sir Derek Jacobi, Sir Ian McKellen and Judy Garland to name but a few, during his short and exciting stage career.

Alan was known to most of us as the Front of House Manger at the Lowther Theatre during the Covid pandemic. It was due to him and his team of volunteers that we were able to hold face-to-face lectures much earlier than most Societies, because of the superb precautions put in place by the Friends of the Lowther, for which we thank him.

As we don't have a lecture in August we thought a summer Coffee and Pastry Morning would provide an opportunity for members to meet up and socialise before the start of the new season. Once again, the venue was Fylde Rugby Club. A few team members gave very brief presentations on their roles within the Society and emphasised what fun it was to be involved. Nigel, our Chair, highlighted that his position will become vacant in November and the need for a replacement.

We were all delighted when Christine Cockburn won the raffle! Christine has organised our lecture raffles for years – she didn't organise this one but had the all important winning ticket!



A journey through the Chinese Imperial wardrobe

By Pam Foster

Our May 2023 Study Day, *Exploring Power and Status – Imperial Chinese Court*, comprised three lectures on how highly decorated costume and textiles were used at the Chinese Imperial Court to denote the rank and status of the wearer.

Lecturer David Rosier has spent more than 25 years working and living in Asia. Whilst living in Hong Kong he and his wife built up an impressive collection of nearly 700, predominately Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), Imperial, and related textiles and costume accessories. In late 2019, the whole collection was acquired by The Shanghai Museum.

We started off by looking at costume regulations, which date to China's first dynasty – The Qin 221-206 BCE, and then traced the evolution of court costume through to the fall of the Ming Dynasty in 1644. Our second lecture focused on the last dynasty of China, Qing Dynasty 1644-1911, and explored the regulated, mandatory, formal court costume, dress accessories, and insignia of rank worn by members of the Chinese Imperial clan, including the Emperor, and civil and military officials. This period represented the pinnacle of artistic and technical creation. After lunch, David concentrated on informal wear and dress accessories for Chinese High Society in the 19th century, when the wearer was no longer constrained by Imperial regulations. These freedoms included robes, hats, collars, jewellery and footwear, including bound feet shoes.

David brought along lots of examples to create a vibrant and colourful display of beautiful silks displaying the various insignia of rank badges. During the lectures we had learned about common design themes such as dragon imagery, and the use of designs from nature and various religions, which we were able to see depicted in the many examples he brought along.





Manchester's 'High Line'

By Allan Foster

Many people have heard about New York's High Line. It was once a rail track, which went out of use in 1980. In 2009, the 1.45-mile-long strip was transformed into what is now considered one of the most unique parks in NYC.

Three thousand miles away, the Castlefield Viaduct has been an iconic part of the Manchester skyline since its construction in 1892, as it carried trains in and out of the city. The structural engineers involved, Heenan & Froude, were also responsible for the construction of Blackpool Tower.

The 300m long Viaduct was abandoned in 1969 and left to local wildlife, becoming a home to different species of plants and animals. Visionaries developed ambitious plans to turn it into the North's equivalent of the High Line. The National Trust have worked with local partners to turn Castlefield Viaduct into a space for people to enjoy and nature to flourish.

It's now a public space, a collection of delightful small gardens, some of wild flowers, others maintained by local community groups. And the vista over Manchester is superb. Apart from the restored 150m or so that can be walked and enjoyed, there's another similar stretch which is unoccupied and which the Trust and partners hope can be restored and opened up to the public in due course.

It is opened for pre-booked guided walks between 11.00-13.00 and for casual 'walk ups' from 13.00-16.00 every day. Check before travelling, but do make a visit and enjoy this excellent community facility. Informed interpretation by the young NT staff will make you feel very welcome.

(Castlefield Viaduct, Manchester, Greater Manchester, M3 4LG).

Japanese Woodblock Prints: what are they and how did we get to know them in Western Europe?

By Chris David

One of the most famous images in the world is a Japanese woodblock picture. You will probably have seen *The Great Wave Off Kanagawa*, 1831, by Katsushika Hokusai (1760 - 1849), on mugs, tee shirts, postcards and many other items. It's so famous I haven't used space up for the image in this article, but I think it is worth asking, what are Japanese woodblocks and how did we get to know them in Western Europe?

An artist draws a picture which is transferred to a block of wood. The picture is cut into the surface of the wood, ink is applied to what is left and then the woodblock is pressed onto paper and the image is transferred. This can be done repeatedly in either monochrome or colour. This form of printing was done for centuries in China and Korea, but became popular in Japan from the 17th century onwards, using superior Japanese paper.

Japan was ruled by Shoguns for many centuries. In the Edo (Tokyo) Period, 1603 to 1867, the country was deliberately cut off from outside influence, at the same time as education was made available to a greater number of citizens. This led to an isolated cultural development for an increasingly wealthy bourgeoisie. This cultural form was known as Ukiyo – The Floating World. Art was widely bought up in the form of woodblock prints and books, and was known as Ukiyo-e.

These woodblock prints can be broadly categorised as landscapes, flora and fauna, beautiful women, Kabuki theatre and pornography. I've decided to exclude the latter from this article. This first landscape example is *Kiyomizu Hall and Shinobazu Pond at Ueno*, 1857, from *One Hundred Views of Edo* by Hiroshige (1797 – 1858), who is perhaps the most well known of the woodblock artists after Hokusai. Landscapes were often produced as a series of views linked by location or on stopping points on long distance routes.



Kiyomizu Hall and Shinobazu Pond at Ueno

The second landscape here is a snow scene, *Atagoshita and Yabu Lane*, 1857, also by Hiroshige. Snow scenes were particularly popular and are also very beautiful. In Western European art, single point perspective became predominant from the fifteenth century onwards as a way of depicting three dimensions on a two dimensional surface. This was not generally the case in Japan where multi-point perspective was used to encourage the viewer to travel across the picture. But as Japan started to open up to European trade from the 1850s onward, Japanese artists started to adopt a, to us in the West, more recognisable approach to perspective. This can be seen in this second picture. This opening up of trade also led to the introduction into Japan of Western European pigments and colours, in particular the range of blues available.



Atagoshita and Yabu Lane



A Flycatcher on Cucumber Bush

Also easily appreciated on the wider world stage are the flora and fauna pictures such as *A Flycatcher on a Cucumber Bush*, 1910, by Ohara Kosan. This is a good example of the use of negative or empty space, here in the bottom left of the picture, which is a popular technique used to emphasize the main subject matter and common in both Japanese and Chinese art.

Waiting to See the Next Volume, 1852, by Utugawa Kuniyoshi is an example of a picture of a beautiful woman. These women were often depicted doing ordinary things, such as reading or washing themselves and were courtesans, geisha girls or noble ladies. The pictures were very popular and epitomized the essence of Ukiyo.



Waiting to See the Next Volume

Perhaps less accessible to viewers from outside of Japan are the pictures of Kabuki theatre actors and scenes, such as *Ichikawa Omezo 1 in the Role of Yakko Ippei* from the play *Koinyobo Somewaki Tazuna*, 1794, by Toshusai Sharuki. These prints were the equivalent of modern day posters of celebrities, and although they mean little to us now we can still appreciate the skill of the artists.

So how did we come to know these prints in Western Europe? As trade with Japan opened up from the mid-19th Century, large numbers of prints became available to buy for relatively little cost. Many Impressionist and Post Impressionist painters, such as Degas and Van Gogh, collected these prints and it affected their approach to composition and their use of colour. This influence on Western art, architecture and music was known as Japonisme.

In parallel with the development of woodblock printing in the East, wood engraving developed in the West. From Albrecht Dürer, through Thomas Bewick to John Nash and Eric Ravilious in the early 20th century. More commonly today we are exposed to printing from lino cuts, such as the book cover illustrations of Angela Harding.

If you are interested in seeing some of these Japanese prints in reality in the North West of England, Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery has the largest collection outside London, which includes prints by both Hokusai and Hiroshige. (At the time of writing the Museum is closed for repairs but should reopen later in the autumn).

References

Japanese Woodblocks – Masterpieces of Art, Michael Robinson, 2014, Flame Tree Publishing

Hiroshige, Adele Schlombs, 2021, Taschen GmbH

Hokusai – A Life in Drawing, Henri-Alexis Baasch, 2016, Thames and Hudson

(All the images used in this article were obtained from WikiArt and are in the public domain).



Ichikawa Omezo 1 in the Role of Yakko Ippei



The Arts Society Fylde
theartssocietyfylde.org.uk

A member of The Arts Society

Members pursue a mutual interest in the arts through lectures on a wide range of decorative and fine arts topics including art, sculpture, jewellery design, architecture and garden design. Lectures are on the first Wednesday of every month at 2pm at the Lowther Pavilion, Lowther Terrace, Lytham St Annes FY8 5QQ.

Chair: Nigel Bramley-Haworth

In the Picture is edited by Pam Foster. It is published twice a year in spring and autumn. If you would like to submit an item please contact the editor at pamfos@gmail.com

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