

Paper abstracts and speaker biographies

Keynote address

Dr Meaghan Clarke (University of Sussex)

The Women that Shaped Art History: Defining the 'Masterpiece' in the Nineteenth Century

The subject of this conference raises a series of questions: who were the women writing about Old Masters? What do we know about these women? How and where were they able to see Old Masters? Where were they writing? The conference title highlights the significance of Anna Jameson, who, while ridiculed by Ruskin for knowing 'as much of art as the cat', set a precedent for later generations of women art writers. There were in fact many women working across the period. An overview of research on these women reveals recurring themes such as the importance of networks, travel, translation and empiricism. This paper will initially consider women's contributions to art writing and the patterns that emerged as the century progressed. The current National Gallery exhibition *Reflections* brings together *Van Eyck and the Pre-Raphaelites* and the second half of the paper will look at how the Victorian fascination with Old Masters re-emerged at the end of the century. The study of the early Renaissance in Italian painting was foregrounded by a group of writers. While the best known are Roger Fry and Bernard Berenson, women were also involved in developing this new scholarship. The writer and artist Christiana Herringham established expertise on early Renaissance techniques. Herringham's involvement in not just art writing, but exhibitions of 'masterpieces', offers insight into the shaping of art history at the fin-de-siècle.

Meaghan Clarke is a Senior Lecturer in Art History at the University of Sussex. She is the author of *Critical Voices: Women and Art Criticism in Britain 1880-1905* (2005). Recently she co-edited, with Francesco Ventrella, 'Women's Expertise and the Culture of Connoisseurship' for *Visual Resources* (2017). Her articles include: "'The Greatest Living Critic": Christiana Herringham and the Practice of Connoisseurship' *Visual Resources* (2017); 'On Tempera and Temperament: Women, Art, and Feeling at the Fin de Siècle' *19*, (2016); 'The Art Press at the Fin-de-siècle: Women, Collecting and Connoisseurship in *The Studio, The Connoisseur and The Burlington Magazine*', *Visual Resources* (2015); 'Seeing in Black-and-White: Incidents in Print Culture', *Art History* (2012), and 'Sex and the City: the Metropolitan New Woman' in *The Camden Town Group in Context* (Tate 2012). Dr Clarke is currently working on a book entitled *Fashionability, Exhibition Culture and Gender Politics: Fair Women*.

Session one

Professor Julie Sheldon (Liverpool John Moores University)

Lady Eastlake's Collaborative Writing on the Old Masters

The dispersal of the great royal and aristocratic collections in Europe into public galleries exposed the Old Masters to the public gaze and called for experts and commentators to lay out the ways with which visitors could engage with works that were presented in a bewildering array of schools and styles, whose authorship was unsettled by disputatious attributions, and whose iconography was challenging. Unlike contemporary art, which required critics to adjudicate on its merits, Old Master art required special forms of scholarship and commentary – works had to be authenticated, it was necessary to locate artists within the correct school, paintings needed to be deciphered and finally – as the concept of the Old Master broadened to include ‘primitives’ – the work needed to be appreciated. Lady Eastlake was one of a number of women to lay especial claim to knowledge about Old Master art in the nineteenth century. However, unlike writers such as Anna Jameson, Julia Cartwright, Emilia Dilke, Maria Callcott and Vernon Lee, all of whom contributed to the expanding literature of the Old Masters under their own names, Lady Eastlake's writings were frequently published anonymously or collaboratively. This paper examines how Lady Eastlake wielded her authority as a writer on the Old Masters when she was obliged to manufacture a persona from within the confines of collaboration or anonymity. Two publications are spotlighted from 1864 that illustrate the power of her particular forms of commentary: the first a collaboration with Anna Jameson for *The History of our Lord* (1864) and the second her anonymous review of the same publication for the *Quarterly Review* (co-authored with Harriet Grote). The paper will consider how she used these modes of publication to demonstrate and dramatise her expertise – and to assert her presence at the axis of criticism and art history.

Julie Sheldon is Professor of Art History at Liverpool John Moores University, where she is also Dean of the Doctoral Academy. She writes on nineteenth and twentieth-century art and her related books include: *The Letters of Lady Eastlake* (2009); *Art for the Nation* (2011) (with Susanna Avery-Quash); and *The Della Robbia Pottery: From Renaissance to Regent Street* (2016).

Dr Lene Østermark-Johansen (University of Copenhagen)

“This will be a popular picture”: Giovanni Battista Moroni's 'Tailor' and the Female Gaze

When Giovanni Battista Moroni's portrait of a tailor entered the National Gallery collection in 1862, Elizabeth Eastlake quite rightly predicted in her diary that 'This will be a popular picture'. The painting was the star exhibit at the Royal Academy Moroni exhibition in 2014, and in the intervening 150 years its appeal to spectators of both sexes has been unwavering. As a sitter who knowingly gazes back at the spectator, Moroni's *Tailor* provokes powerful and imaginative responses from both male and female viewers. The ubiquity of *The Tailor* in late nineteenth-century culture—reproduced in prints, painted copies, needlepoint, trading cards—made him a popular subject for charades and tableaux vivants. This paper looks at a range of female responses to the painting: from Margaret Oliphant's view of it as a realist portrait (1881),

depicting a Renaissance artisan to George Egerton's use of it in *A Psychological Moment* (1894) as an ideal portrait of the only tailor her female protagonist would care to know. Ever since George Eliot's comparison of her sinister male protagonist Grandcourt to a Moroni in *Daniel Deronda* (1876), the sitter has been associated with something dark and ominous, and I shall discuss the painting's place in such *fin-de-siècle* Gothic narratives as *The Accursed Cordonnier* (1900) and *The Lady-Killer* (1902) as a magic object with sinister powers. A ladies' man as well as a queer icon, appealing to Henry James, Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde, Moroni's *Tagliapanni* is attractive in his anonymity, and I wish to question whether his appeal to a late nineteenth-century audience was gendered. Master or servant, fantasy man and ideal lover of men and women alike, the *Tailor*—in his effeminate red and white costume with the discreet codpiece—raises issues of the erotic and psychological appeal of Old Master portraiture, rooted in a sitter whose very profession is tied to the dressing and concealing of the naked human body and soul.

Lene Østermark-Johansen is Reader in English art and literature at the University of Copenhagen. The author of *Sweetness and Strength: The Reception of Michelangelo in Late Victorian England* (1998) and of *Walter Pater and the Language of Sculpture* (2011) she has published widely on art writing and on the reception of the Old Masters in Victorian England.

Professor Patricia Rubin (New York University)

"The reverence for Old Masters is not all humbug and superstition": George Eliot, Lady Eastlake, and the humbug of Old Masters

Glossing an entry in George Eliot's journal where she records her reaction to paintings by Rubens in Antwerp provides an opportunity to consider the commonplaces and conventions that informed writing about art in the mid-nineteenth century and the place of two uncommonly gifted women as contributors to the discourse of the arts at that time. The paper asks what constituted 'humbug' in relation to Old Masters and what might be regarded as humdrum in their appreciation. In many ways contrasting figures, as authors, George Eliot and Elizabeth Eastlake (née Rigby) manifest the manifold voices of woman writers and the multiple possibilities for writing about art historically. Rigorous researchers, acute observers, and keen literary stylists, they were serious, passionate, and humorous. Both wrote for different purposes and in different genres in ways that allow for an exploration of the degree to which a 'woman's experience and observations bring within her special knowledge' (to quote George Eliot once again), or rather that they might bring special knowledge to a developing and debated realm of knowledge.

Patricia Rubin's specialist field is Italian Renaissance art. She has just completed a book, *Seen from Behind: Perspectives on the Male Body and Renaissance Art* (Yale University Press, 2018), but her interest in forms of historical writing and the ways that they contribute to the historical understanding of the arts beginning with Vasari's *Lives* (*Giorgio Vasari. Art and History*, 1995) has resulted in publications on nineteenth-century topics, including "'Not ... what I would fain offer, but ... what I am able to present': Mrs. Jonathan Foster's translation of Vasari's *Lives*," in *Le Vite del Vasari: Genesi, Topoi, Ricezione/ Die Vite Vasari: Entstehung, Topoi, Rezeption*, ed. Katja Burzer et al. (2010) and, with reference to Henry James, "'The Liar': Fictions of the Person," *Art History* (2011).

Session two

Professor Diane Apostolos-Cappadona (Georgetown University, Reiss)

'I can only see with woman's eyes...': Mrs Jameson on the Old Masters

Anna Brownell Murphy Jameson (1794-1860) was a respected and influential author of numerous books and journal articles including what she referred to as her 'companions' to art galleries and Continental travel. From the outset of her almost forty-year career, she announced that 'I can only see with woman's eyes, and think and feel as I believe every woman *must*, whatever may be her love for the arts.' The transformation of a governess into a respected art critic was a result of her dedication to learning and research. Throughout her texts from *Diary of an Ennuyée* to the *Legends of the Madonna*, she commented regularly on Raphael's depictions of the Madonna noting especially the singular personal importance of his *Sistine Madonna* in Dresden and bemoaning the sale of his *Alba Madonna* to Tsar Nicholas. By reviewing both Mrs Jameson's texts and revisions of her analyses of Raphael's depictions of the Madonna, the paper will explain how she came to her understanding that the Old Masters were conveyors of cultural history and social values. Her research methods evolved from initial commentary into careful on-site study combined with primary research in both museum archives and libraries as well as conversations and correspondence with museum directors, curators, and leading scholars such as G.F. Waagen. Further, a comparison of Jameson's analyses of Raphael's depictions of the Madonna with those of Alexis-François Rio and Lord Lindsay reveals a gendered distinction between what Jameson initially identified as her 'woman's eyes' and the perspectives of some of her male contemporaries, and her ability to transform that difference into her texts. The paper will argue that it was her 'woman's eyes' that brought about the lasting success and multiple editions of her companion guides and books on Christian art especially in comparison to those of Rio and Lindsay.

Diane Apostolos-Cappadona is Haub Director of Catholic Studies and Professor of Religious Art and Cultural History at Georgetown University. She is the author of scholarly articles and books including a *Dictionary of Christian Art*, *Dictionary of Women in Religious Art*, and with Lucinda Ebersole edited *Women, Creativity and the Arts*. She is currently Editor of the Brill Research *Perspectives in Religion and the Arts* and the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Religion and the Arts*.

Dr Zahira Véliz Bomford (Museum of Fine Arts, Houston)

How Mary Philadelphia Merrifield wrote on the arts: navigating networks in the Victorian age

When Mary Philadelphia Merrifield (1804-1889) wrote her three major published works on the fine arts in the 1840s, she was simultaneously fulfilling several additional demanding roles. Married to a Brighton barrister with delicate health, and mother to five children between the ages of 8 and 21 living at home, Merrifield's domestic management alone would have consumed the waking hours of most Victorian women. Her ageing mother also lived with the family, and the education of the younger children was undertaken at home. On the surface, this setting seems an unlikely one for a researcher whose investigation into the authentic materials and methods of the Old Masters would bring her to the attention of the Fine Arts Commission, convened in response to the challenge of rebuilding the Houses of Parliament after the fire of 1834.

Close reading of Merrifield's published works, together with her own correspondence, and that of her broader family and associates, illuminates the complex networks that were fundamental to her ability to research, write and publish. She was supported by strong and constant encouragement from her husband and collaboration from her family. At the same time, her non-official status seems to have allowed a degree of familiarity in her correspondence with some of the powerful figures in the art-political world, such as Sir Robert Peel or Sir Charles Eastlake, whose support was also key. The pursuit of her research missions on the continent allowed her to develop her own network of specialist researchers. In the libraries, art academies and galleries where her identity as a foreign woman seems to have excused her from the social censure normally expected for those of her sex who ventured into activities associated with the male sphere, she secured respect and even friendship.

Merrifield's publications on the materials of the Old Masters have stood the test of time extraordinarily well. Her writing is not only of note because the author was a woman. Merrifield is still an authoritative source often cited in the publications on technical art history, and her words retain scholarly value related closely to her original aims. Perhaps the informally collaborative nature of her research, writing and publishing brought the components of opinion and rigorous argument into a just equilibrium.

Zahira Véliz Bomford, trained as a paintings conservator and an art historian at Oberlin College and the Courtauld Institute, has worked in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, the Prado Museum, Madrid, for The National Trust, and most recently, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Her publications have been in the areas of technical studies, analysis and translation of original sources, Spanish drawings, Velázquez, Alonso Cano, and the history of conservation. Her most recent publications are: *Practical Discourses on the Most Noble Art of Painting by Jusepe Martínez*, ed. Z. Véliz and translated with D. McGrath (Getty Publications: Getty Research Institute), 2017 and 'Mrs. Merrifield's quest: a new methodology for technical art history', *Burlington Magazine* (June 2017), pp. 465-475.

Dr Caroline Palmer (Ashmolean Museum)

'A revolution in art': Maria Callcott on Poussin, painting and the Primitives

In 1845 the Athenaeum bewailed the apparent loss to the Nation of an 'exquisite fragment' by Filippino Lippi: the *Angel Adoring* once owned by the painter Augustus Wall Callcott and his wife Maria. The 'Cream of gentlemen critics', they declared, should blush with shame to see this 'gem' snapped up by a dealer instead of being 'enshrined for universal homage' in the National Gallery. This early tempera painting, possibly first bought by Maria herself, epitomises the revolutionary ideas set out in her publications on art.

Initially known for her travel writing, the 'intrepid' Maria launched her art-historical career in 1820 with a pioneering biography of Nicolas Poussin. In this she underlined the value of artists as connoisseurs, emphasizing the importance of their practical knowledge in analysing art of the past. A close friend of painters such as Thomas Lawrence and J.M.W. Turner, she was especially fond of Charles Eastlake, and shared his desire to promote art that lay beyond the prevailing canon of early nineteenth-century Britain.

When the Callcotts embarked on their honeymoon tour of Europe in 1827, the couple deliberately sought out 'Primitive' works in Germany and Italy, meeting the curators, collectors and artists who were producing a 'revolution' in taste. Discussions with the Boisserée brothers, Carl Vogel and Carlo Lasinio, for example, led to a fresh understanding of materials and techniques, explored in Maria's ground-breaking *Essays Towards the History of Painting* (1836).

Prevented by ill health from making a substantial published contribution to the history of art, Maria Callcott influenced artistic debates of the day through her informal 'salon' in Kensington. This paper will focus on how she used her personal networks and travel experience to reassess works by the Old Masters. Dwelling in the 'densest atmosphere of art', she was instrumental in challenging conventional wisdom, while also helping to combat prejudice against the female connoisseur.

After studying Modern Languages at King's College, Cambridge, **Caroline Palmer** became an editor with publishers Thames & Hudson. Her thesis 'Women writers on art and perceptions of the female connoisseur, 1780–1860' (AHRC, 2009) focused on the art-historical writings of Maria Callcott, Anna Jameson, Mary Philadelphia Merrifield and Elizabeth Eastlake. A former Associate Lecturer in the History of Art at Oxford Brookes University, she has worked in the Ashmolean's Western Art Print Room since 2009. In 2016 she was co-editor with Carly Collier of 'Discovering Ancient and Modern Primitives: The Travel Journals of Maria Callcott, 1827–28', *Walpole Society*, vol. 78.

Session three

Professor Patricia Pulham (University of Surrey)

Venus, Madonnas and Renaissance Art: Vernon Lee and the Old Masters

In the essay, 'Symmetria Prisca', first published as 'The Artistic Dualism of the Renaissance' in the *Contemporary Review* in September 1879, and later published in *Euphorion* (1884), Vernon Lee explores the dynamics between classical, medieval and renaissance art. Here, she takes us on a dizzying journey that traces the impact of unearthed antiquity on the works of Old Masters. Lee details how Niccolò, Giovanni, and Andrea of Pisa, learn from fragments of Greek and Roman sculpture how to model the figure of the Redeemer and how to 'chisel the robe of the Virgin', and argues that it was through 'the sculpture of the Pisans' that 'the painting of the school of Giotto received at second-hand the teachings of antiquity'. For Lee, Italian literature is equally informed by classical culture. She argues that 'real Latin' only begins to be studied when real Italian begins to be written: 'Dante, Petrarca, and Boccaccio were at once the founders of modern literature and the exponents of the literature of antiquity'. Thus, for Lee, the Italian Renaissance is characterised by the transgression of temporal and disciplinary boundaries that enrich the production of art. It is a topic she returns to in *Renaissance Fancies and Studies* (1895) where she considers the 'narrative or dramatic' element in renaissance art and notes that it is present in the work of 'the Pisans, Giotto, and Giotto's followers' who have 'their counterpart, their precursors in the writers and reciters of devotional romances' such as 'the Life of the Magdalen' often printed in certain translations of St. Jerome's 'Lives of the Saints'. Her own works are similarly porous. This paper explores the ways in

which literature and art are bound together not only in Vernon Lee's aesthetic writings, but in her fiction. Focusing on two short stories, 'Dionea' (1890) and 'Sister Benvenuta and the Christ Child' (1905), this paper will explore the ways in which Lee's aesthetic writings on renaissance art inform and subvert conventional readings of Venuses and Madonnas in her literary works.

Patricia Pulham is Professor of Victorian Literature at the University of Surrey. She is author of *Art and the Transitional Object in Vernon Lee's Supernatural Tales* (2008), and she is currently working on *The Sculptural Body in Victorian Literature: Encrypted Sexualities*, a monograph due out with Edinburgh University Press in 2019.

Maria Alambritis (Birkbeck, University of London; National Gallery)

'Such a pleasant little sketch...of this irritable artist': Women art writers and the revival of interest in Mantegna for the British public, 1881-1911

The proliferation of popular serialised artists' monographs in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century English art press has been the focus of recent scholarship which argues for a reassessment of this particular genre of art writing and its role in the development of art history as a discipline in Britain. Women art writers number prominently among the authors within such series. Significantly, many of their contributions form the first separate English-language study of several important Quattrocento North Italian Old Masters. Yet these artists, such as Luca Signorelli, Antonio Pollaiuolo and Andrea Mantegna, were considered unpopular and 'difficult' for the general public to appreciate. This may explain why, despite substantial foreign-language scholarship and Mantegna's never-waning reputation as a 'great' artist, it was not until 1881 that he became the subject of a dedicated study in British art historical scholarship for the first time, with Julia Cartwright's dual monograph *Mantegna and Francia*. This was followed by a host of monographs in Italian, French and German by male scholars, and in Britain with two further monographs by Maud Cruttwell (1901) and Nancy Bell (1911). Taking Mantegna as a case-study, this paper traces the various forms in which Mantegna became increasingly visible to the British public from the mid-century onwards via the practices of acquisition, display, reproduction and travel, and how this visibility translated into Cartwright, Cruttwell and Bell's writing. As earlier women writers such as Anna Jameson, Elizabeth Eastlake and Maria Callcott had successfully promoted the much maligned Italian 'primitives' to a wider British public, a later generation of women art writers took advantage of gaps in English-language art criticism as they worked to establish themselves professionally in the face of an oversaturated British art press during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. By publishing original contributions on under-appreciated artists via a popular format, they found a niche for themselves thereby validating their expertise, while introducing British audiences to a range of Italian Old Masters for the first time.

Maria Alambritis is a second-year PhD student on an AHRC Collaborative Doctoral project with Birkbeck and the National Gallery researching late nineteenth-century women art writers' responses to the Italian Old Masters. Maria completed an interdisciplinary BA in Art History and Literature at the University of East Anglia with Dr Sarah Monks, where she was awarded the School of Art History prize for her dissertation titled 'Vernon Lee and the Work of Art'. Her Master's thesis at the Courtauld, supervised by Professor Caroline Arscott, revaluated the work of the Anglo-Greek watercolourist Marie Spartali Stillman. Before beginning her PhD, she completed

a HLF-funded year-long curatorial traineeship at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and worked as Curatorial Assistant in the Collections department at the Royal Academy of Arts, London.

Dr Francesco Ventrella (University of Sussex)

Writing Under Pressure: Maud Cruttwell and the Professionalisation of Art History

An acolyte of Vernon Lee and the Berensons in Florence, Maud Cruttwell cut her teeth in the world of connoisseurship with the publication of two monographs, one on Signorelli, the other on Mantegna (George Bell, 1899 and 1901). This paper draws on Cruttwell's unpublished letters to Allan Marquand and Ottoline Morrell to shed light on how she conducted her research to complete the first major monograph on Luca and Andrea della Robbia (J.M. Dent, 1902). Although the popularisation of the art press allowed many women art writers to earn an income from their scholarship, the lack of an academic affiliation represented a limit which still needs to be historically assessed. This paper will examine how Cruttwell's work was received in the connoisseurial circles within and outside academia in order to investigate the material conditions of female scholarship on the Old Masters at the turn of the century.

Francesco Ventrella is Lecturer in Art History at the University of Sussex. He was awarded a Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship for a research project entitled *Connoisseurial Intimacies* which he is now turning into a book. He is the editor, with Meaghan Clarke, of the special issue of *Visual Resources* 'Women's Expertise and the Culture of Connoisseurship' (2017).

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