

# Art Friends Warwickshire

## ARTLOOK

December 2022



Winslow Homer, *The Life Line*, 1884

Dear Art Friend

Our final event of 2022 on 1 December at Compton Verney promises to be different. The hands-on examination of their remarkable Chinese bronzes collection is linked to lunch with fellow members and the chance to see the exhibition of Dutch flower paintings. According to our recent survey, the day epitomises exactly what our members most appreciate: the chance to share in-person, with like-minded people, our love of art. A summary of the survey's results features on page 6.

Not included, but issued to you separately last week, are the eagerly awaited details of Gill Ashley-Smith's tour planned for next June in Yorkshire. And again from the survey, it is gratifying to Gill to know that many of you rate highly the chance to tour and explore art in other parts of the country. January 5 is deadline for this popular tour.

Since our last **ARTLOOK** we have run two Zoom events, both well-attended. Patrick Baty discussed the intricacies of tracking down original paint colours for heritage restoration, including at Stowe which we shall visit in the summer. Professor Paul Smith of the University of Warwick showed us his own close-up photography of details of paintings by Cézanne, now on view at Tate Modern, which will ensure we examine the works more closely if we get down to London for the exhibition.

And to show how we can be fleet of foot, discussions with Sarah Shalgosky, director of the Mead Gallery at the University of Warwick, led to us setting up a small group visit in November to see the *Radical Landscapes* exhibition to which we have contributed funding for educational projects. It proved so popular with members that a repeat date was booked to satisfy demand.

### **Events**

In *January* we start with a Zoom talk on Kelmscott Manor and William Morris - the ideal precursor to our May coach visit to the house and gardens. For *February* we return to Princethorpe College to learn more about the creation of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel. See *Diary Dates* for events later in the year.

### **This Issue**

Thanks to member, Chris Barney who reviews the moving film on Eric Ravilious, particularly as a war artist. This autumn, two London exhibitions have focused on American artists and David Howells shares his view.

### **Diary Dates**

Remember that if you want to check on events, our website will be refreshed with the up-to-date position of each as they develop, so keep an eye on our website [www.artfriendswarks.uk](http://www.artfriendswarks.uk). Follow the links to find further details and booking forms elsewhere on the website.

- **December 3, Saturday, 10am-7pm Leamington ArtFest, a fine art and design show at All Saints Church. Artists exhibiting and selling. Free to enter. Supported by Art Friends Warwickshire.**
- **January 17, Tuesday**, Zoom talk on Kelmscott Manor (see p4)
- **February 21, Tuesday**, lecture at Princethorpe on the Sistine Chapel (see p5)
- **April 4, Tuesday** AGM at Kineton Village Hall, talk on the art collection of Upton House
- **May 3, Wednesday**, visit to Kelmscott Manor
- **June, Sunday 25 to Thursday 29, five days tour of Yorkshire**  
**BOOKING DEADLINE JANUARY 5. Contact us if you missed the email.**

### **Writing For ARTLOOK**

Thanks to members contributing to this issue. Do you have a piece of art you could write about for **ARTLOOK**? The next issue appears **early February** so copy deadline would be **mid-January** please. Drop me a line if you have an article for us.

Dianne Page, *Editor*

[dianne@artfriendswarks.uk](mailto:dianne@artfriendswarks.uk)

### **Art Friends Warwickshire Committee:**

**David Howells, Chairman, Gill Ashley-Smith, Sandra Clowes, Alex Corrin, Dianne Page, Ann Tollett, Susan Yeomans**

## **MEMBERSHIP by Chairman, David Howells**

I am glad to say that our membership now stands at 203, including 26 joint memberships. Building on that foundation, in the near future we will be launching a membership drive.

We established ourselves in the present form at the end of 2019, with the membership fee set at £15. Since then, it has stayed at that figure. Your committee has now decided to increase the fee to £20. Our costs, although small and well controlled, are on the increase. It also seems that we will have to pay an increasing proportion of our speakers at a commercial or near-commercial rate, compared to our early days when many of them waived their fee.

Given the relatively low sum involved, we decided to move directly to £20 rather than go to an intermediate figure. This will put us on a sound footing across our range of activities. I hope you will feel that this still represents good value. Shortly, our Treasurer, Sue Yeomans, will send you an invitation to renew your membership, giving you options on how to do this.

## **ANN STARKEY**

Organisations only succeed if managed efficiently, often by the Secretary. One such was Ann Starkey, who sadly died last month. For many years, Ann took this role within Art Fund Volunteers - Warwickshire, precursor to Art Friends Warwickshire. Her skills learnt as a trained home economist not only ensured an organised approach to managing our affairs, but also provided us with the best biscuits when she hosted meetings at the home where she was always centre of family gatherings. When Ann decided to step down, we were confident that our paperwork would be up-to-date as she handed over to the now late Peter Ashley-Smith. She is remembered with affection for her enthusiasm and positivity.

## **AWARDS COMMITTEE REPORT**



This August Leamington's unique Art in the Park Festival attracted over 38,000 visitors for its eighth year. Supported by funding from Art Friends Warwickshire, an outreach programme engaged with schools and 18 workshops around the county and across a breadth of organisations including dementia, Asian ladies, Pride Youth and Ukrainian refugees. The festival is now the largest, free outdoor arts gathering in Warwickshire and, in their review, the organisers expressed their gratitude for our grant. (Above: a reminder of those hot summer days.)

## **KELMSCOTT MANOR, A ZOOM LECTURE BY MARISKA BEERENKAMP-WLADIMIROFF**

**Tuesday, 17 January, 11am**



Kelmscott Manor

Kelmscott Manor has been shaped by the people who inhabited the house, and none more so than William Morris who described it as 'Heaven on earth'. The Victorian artist, designer and conservationist loved the original craftsmanship of the house, and he, his family and friends would add to its wonderful furnishings and intriguing stories. Please join art historian, Mariska Beerenkamp-Wladimiroff as she introduces some of the characters that made Kelmscott Manor.

Later in the year, on May 3, we shall visit this Grade 1 listed manor which re-opened in 2022 following significant conservation and restoration work. So, Mariska's talk will be essential viewing for those wishing to join the tour to see the fine examples of furniture, pictures, textiles, ceramics and metalwork, and the gardens too.

**Price per ticket: £10 per viewer.**

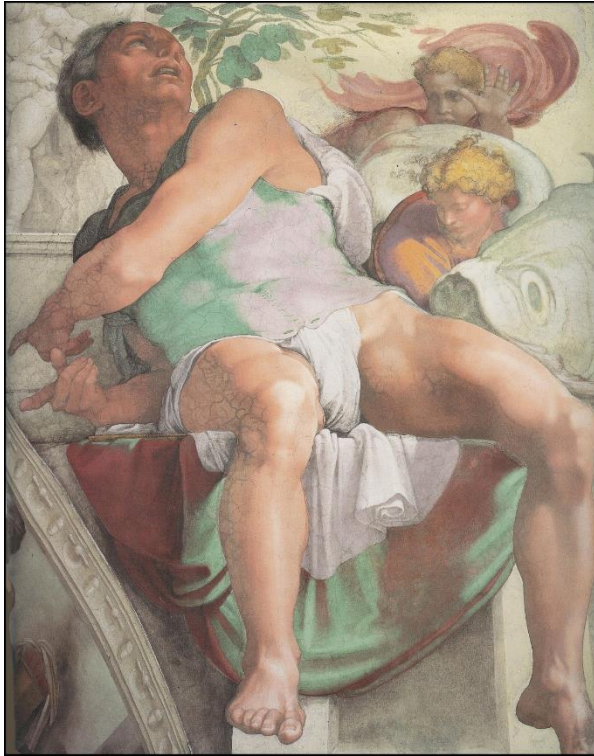
**Booking: see Event Booking p11**

**Contact: Alex Corrin [alex@artfriendswarks.uk](mailto:alex@artfriendswarks.uk)**



## **THE SISTINE CHAPEL, A LECTURE BY ROSS KING**

**Princethorpe College, Sixth Form Centre, Rugby CV23 9PX  
Tuesday 21 February, 10.30 – 11.30 am**



In 1508, Pope Julius II - known because of his military expeditions as the 'Warrior Pope' - commissioned Michelangelo to fresco the vault of the Sistine Chapel. Michelangelo had very limited experience of the physically and technically difficult technique of fresco, much less on the underside of a 12,000-square-foot surface. His reputation had been made in sculpture, with works such as the *Pietà* and the *David*, rather than in paint. This illustrated lecture examines the circumstances surrounding Michelangelo's commission and how, in the four years between 1508 and 1512, he worked on his immense fresco in direct competition with Raphael, his younger and prodigiously talented contemporary, who was working on his own frescoes a few steps away in the Papal Apartments.

Our lecturer, Ross King, is the best-selling author of books on French and Italian art history. His book, *Michelangelo and the Pope's Ceiling* was published in 2002. His latest publication, *The Bookseller of Florence*, was the subject of four years of research and writing and marks his return to the 'Golden Age' of fifteenth-century Florence.

We are grateful to Princethorpe College for their support of this lecture.

### **Timing:**

10am meet for coffee.

10.30 the lecture begins and it ends around 11.45.

**Price per ticket: £14 including tea/biscuits on arrival**

**Booking: see Event Booking p11**

**Booking closes on Monday 13 February**

**Contact: Susan Yeomans [sue@artfriendswarks.uk](mailto:sue@artfriendswarks.uk) or [suziequality@gmail.com](mailto:suziequality@gmail.com)**

**Art  
Friends  
Warwickshire**

## **SURVEY FOR THE FUTURE**

Thank you to all of you who took the time to complete our recent on-line survey. As Art Friends Warwickshire enters its third year, it is important to review what has succeeded and what worked less well. The findings are invaluable in guiding us to plan our offer to you, our members. The following is an outline of our analysis with our conclusions.

We received 79 responses, some 42% of members, which compares favourably with our previous survey in 2021 which was Covid focused and attracted a 50% return.

### **Events**

Talks in-person, visits and our annual tour form our principal attraction for members. The majority of us are happy to meet in-person throughout the year, either morning or afternoon. Interestingly, 42% would also attend an evening meeting. We have noted for future events that a reasonable proportion – nearly a third – would welcome speakers using a microphone.

*Zoom*, our life-line during Covid, is popular with the majority either morning or afternoon, but less so in the evening. The question flagged that Zoom talks would be occasional, so not instead of in-person.

*Coach travel* to a venue appeals to the majority (73%), even up to two hours each way. Self-driving to an event is also popular but the preference is for only one hour each way (81%) as only 56% would drive up to 1 ½ hours each way. Both of these findings are helpful in selecting locations for visits. Future timing of events, especially in winter, will be guided by the response from 60% saying that they do not like to drive in the dark.

*London* is not often on our programme but an encouraging 71% of you indicated that you would be prepared to travel independently by train to attend an event. Slightly more (77%) said that Saturdays would be acceptable for events, something we have not tried for many years and could be appropriate in future.

*Our annual tours* are popular and 60% would book for a 4/5-day coach trip within the UK. That number rises slightly to 65% for a shorter 2/3-day tour. Because our members are active with other calls on their time, the majority require more than two months' notice. We received many suggestions for future tours and the counties of the South-West came marginally highest, followed by East Anglia/Eastern England. Equally popular were the North-West, including the Lakes, and the North/Yorkshire. Just behind them came the South-East/Home Counties, Scotland, Island of Ireland, Wales – all level-pegging. And for those who remember the tour of the South of France, nearly half of respondents would be up for a tour on the Continent.

### **Art Focus**

Unsurprisingly, Painting and Impressionism came high on preferences, but architecture and sculpture also scored highly. Your suggestions for topics were wide-ranging and glass and ceramics were most frequently put forward. Other ideas included Art Nouveau, Art Deco, costume, jewellery, Japanese art, sculpture gardens, private stately homes, women's and black art. These responses can guide our choice of events in future. Equally, the low score of video arts, photography and installations can alert us to what would be too niche to attract sufficient numbers.

## **Awards**

The Awards element of Art Friends Warwickshire was not high on the agenda of respondents although the majority is supportive of what we do and that we use our surplus to create a fund. Equally, two-thirds feel informed about how we use the funds. Encouragingly, nearly half would pay slightly more for tickets but only a fifth would pay £5 more.

Of the targets for awards, the highest support was for Education-related projects 77%, followed by mental health and well-being 73%. Roughly equal in support around 65% are child/young people, aspiring artists and community artworks. Promotion of established artists received less support – 43%.

The suggestion for Crowd Funding for a specific project provided no conclusive indication of support. However there is a large middle ground which might be swayed with the right project.

## **ARTLOOK**

If you have reached this far in the review, you are among the majority (86%) usually reading this newsletter and, of these, the editorial and events notices are read by nearly all. An encouraging 88% read the articles. The length and frequency are regarded as about right, 82% and 88% respectively. The 11 suggestions for improvement included six asking for shorter pieces.

## **Website**

Just over half use it occasionally and find it easy to navigate. The Events pages are most popular among readers followed by **ARTLOOK** and Awards. The main improvement would be to add the booking form for events. Around a third never consult the website and, as it appears that 88% of us do *not* use FaceBook we shall not pursue that route for now.

## **Membership**

Encouragingly, 92% value their membership of Art Friends Warwickshire, with **ARTLOOK** and the in-person talks highest in importance to them, closely followed by our award giving and days out.

## **Improvements**

This section was of most interest as we are keen to adapt to what you seek from membership. Of the 38 comments received, 18 offered no suggestions, instead congratulating the committee for what we do; for which we are most grateful. Among the rest, no particular suggestions dominated but all will help shape our future timings and programmes.

## **The Future**

Your committee is encouraged by the findings and is grateful for your input, however, it is our role to maintain the level of talks and visits which form the basis of our group of art enthusiasts. Currently, the greatest challenge is to find good speakers on topics which we know will appeal to the majority of you. If you have heard of someone, please flag it to a member of the committee and we can try to sign them up.

## THE AMERICANS BY DAVID HOWELLS

In 1969 I was a student in the United States. I was told, somewhat to my surprise, that New York was the centre of the art world. It was indeed the centre, at that time, before and for some time afterwards. As a result, we all know a few modern American artists – Jackson Pollock, Andy Warhol, Mark Rothko and others. But we tend to know much less about the long sequence of American artists who preceded them. Museums in London seem to be on a mission to put that right. A few years ago, the Royal Academy gave us George Bellows and the tougher side of New York in the early 1900s. Now the RA has returned to the theme with Milton Avery (1885-1965) while the National Gallery offers Winslow Homer (1836-1910) from an earlier period. The two exhibitions were particularly interesting when seen in quick succession.

### Winslow Homer – Force of Nature



*The Fog Warning, 1885*



*Snap the Whip, 1872*

Homer came from a long line of New Englanders and began his artistic work as a commercial illustrator. At the same time, he was sent by a magazine to the Civil War battlefields where he sketched battle scenes and camp life. Paintings based on these sketches began to establish his reputation. His exposure to the South began a long interest in the institution of slavery and its legacy, both in the US and in the West Indies.

He painted in a bold, figurative style with an emphasis on action, physical effort and the human condition. He spent 1867 in Paris and 1881-82 in Cullercoats, a small fishing village in Northumberland which was then something of an artists' colony. His depiction of tough people doing their best in tough circumstances remains powerful. Returning to the US, he settled on the coast in Maine, where the conditions and the people bore similarities to the North East coast of England. In the 1890s a profound change occurred in his art. Human beings became less important and the sea became central. The raw beauty of the waves became a subject in its own right. This depiction of rough seas and rocks was particularly admired. In his later years he often made winter visits to the Caribbean.

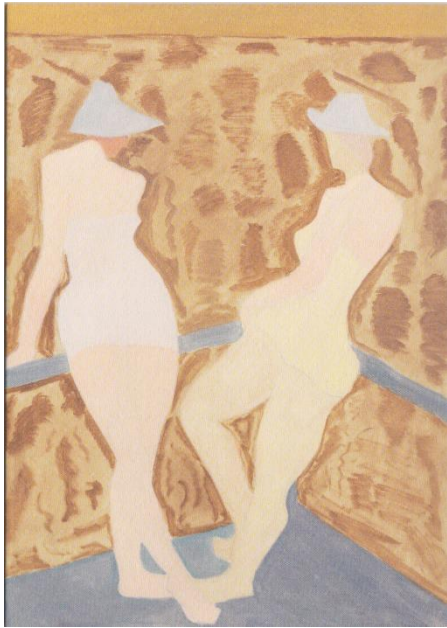
A series of words can be used to indicate elements of his style over a long period: force, race, class, relationships, confrontation. He painted the world as he saw it. I pause at the point to consider what was going on in England at the time, especially the pre-Raphaelites and the classicism of Lord Leighton. I know which I prefer.

Although he did not come from a poor background, his finances were precarious for many years, even after his critical reputation had been established. His work never achieved the popularity of traditional Salon pictures or the flattering portraits of John Singer Sargent. Eventually, of course, he achieved success and by his death he was widely acclaimed as the greatest American artist of his time. He did not philosophise about his art. "I will paint for money



any time,” he said, echoing Dr Johnson’s dictum about writing. I like that. The Winslow Homer exhibition is **open until 8 January**.

### **Milton Avery – American colourist**

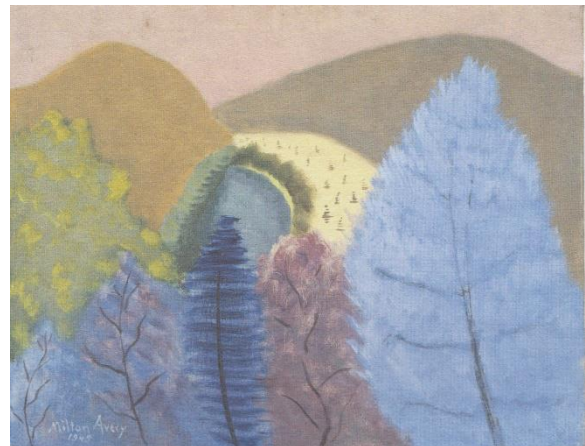


Milton Avery grew up in Connecticut and started work as an assembler in a local factory. Like so many artists he started in art on the commercial side, in lettering. He subsequently worked in insurance for a living while developing as a painter within the local artistic community. In 1925 he moved to New York for the rest of his life while spending summers in the art colony of Gloucester, Massachusetts. In 1926 marriage enabled him to devote himself completely to painting.

Avery’s painting shows an interesting and important development. He began under the broad influence of American Impressionism, painting in a delicate representational style. Quite soon this developed into a looser representation of reality, still within New England’s blue-green palate, and then moved further forward into a style which deployed flat planes of colour. This progression was influenced by frequent visits to New

York’s museums and galleries, especially the Museum of Modern Art which opened in 1929.

A further influence was his close friendship with artists who became major figures in Abstract Impressionism, notably Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman. Some later pieces are strikingly reminiscent of Rothko’s planes of lateral colour. His mature style progressively simplifies nature, using bright, flattened forms, owing much to Matisse. Avery is not concerned with creating the illusion of depth, as most conventional Western painting has been since the Renaissance.



It was not until 1952, with his first full-scale retrospective, that he found mainstream success – perhaps reflecting the more general acceptance of modernism in the New York artistic community. A major patron was Roy Neuberger, who bought over 100 of his paintings and lent them all over the world.

Most of his paintings feature scenes of daily life and serene landscapes from visits to Maine and Cape Cod. Cityscapes did not interest him. Running through his work is a colour sensibility and balance, something that was to have a major influence on the next generation. He was an admirer of Picasso, and their paintings were hung beside each other at several exhibitions.

This exhibition was the first in Europe dedicated to this artist. It has **now closed**.

Above left: *Two Figures*, 1960, Above right: *Blue Trees*, 1945.

## **ERIC RAVILIOUS: DRAWN TO WAR, A FILM REVIEW BY CHRIS BARNEY**

We had heard of Ravilious; he was one of those Great Barfield lot like Edward Bawden and Michael Rothenstein, wasn't he? But we knew very little about him. So, when Compton Verney listed a film, *Eric Ravilious: Drawn to War*, we decided to book.



The film - clearly a labour of love - is the work of Margy Kinmonth who started to record the surviving members of Ravilious's family fifteen years ago. It begins in 1942 when, as an official war artist, Ravilious was in Iceland and we are shown a dramatic scene as a plane crashes into the sea. Ravilious was a passenger and declared lost; the first war artist to die on active service.

The main themes of the film: Ravilious's love of the Sussex landscape and his marriage to fellow artist, Tirzah Garwood, are told through readings of their

letters interspersed with comments by notable figures such as Grayson Perry, the writer Robert MacFarlane, Ai Weiwei, and Alan Bennett as well as Ravilious and Garwood's daughter, Anne, just two years old when her father died. It was nearly another forty years before Ravilious's surviving paintings were discovered under Edward Bawden's bed at Great Barfield. Many of his greatest paintings had been lost when the ship taking them to Brazil was torpedoed on its way to an overseas show aimed at encouraging support for the war.

In the 1930s, Ravilious produced wood engravings and lithographs for book illustrations but it is for his watercolours that he is chiefly known. Apart from a brief experimentation with oils in 1930 – he said it was like trying to paint with toothpaste – Ravilious painted almost entirely in watercolour. He was a master of capturing the gentle, timeless beauty of the Sussex Downlands and of their life there. Grayson Perry says: "There is something he does very well – he takes unprepossessing subjects and makes them into masterpieces."

When war came, he was stationed with the Royal Navy at Scapa Flow and there he painted the bleak but beautiful Orkney landscape with the ships and warplanes. McFarlane describes one image as being both profoundly serene and profoundly disturbing, emphasising his status as a modernist. Sailing on a destroyer which was escorting *HMS Glorious* to the north of Norway, his pictures of the aircraft carrier are particularly poignant as they were painted just one day before she was destroyed with the loss of nearly 1500 men.

The Chinese artist Ai Weiwei admits he knew nothing about Ravilious until Kinmonth approached him because of his installation '[History of Bombs](#)' at the Imperial War Museum. "I was curious to know how a war artist worked, so I accepted the invitation to participate in the project," he says. He was astonished by what he discovered. "His expression is very calm, and he has such an innocent and almost naive painting style. I was deeply moved by the authenticity, attention to detail, and humanitarianism expressed in his artworks about war. He is able to observe and express in an extraordinary way. Although a lot of his works are watercolour paintings that seem like an understatement, they are profound, rigorous and meticulous. I think that Ravilious is one of the best artists in the UK."

The film ends with a repeat of the crash which cost the lives of Ravilious and the pilot. Alan Bennett is quoted as saying, "Painting was his active service and he gave his life for it. I find it hard to say what it is to be English but Ravilious is part of it."

## EVENTS BOOKING INFORMATION

All bookings, including bookings for Virtual Training Sessions, will be handled by our Treasurer, Susan Yeomans. Email [sue@artfriendswarks.uk](mailto:sue@artfriendswarks.uk)

**Deadline for bookings** – see each event.

All Zoom lectures will be delivered online to your home PC, laptop or tablet. To use Zoom, you must have a valid email address that you are willing to provide to Art Friends Warwickshire so that you can receive joining instructions and a link to enable you to view the event online.

### Free Virtual Training

If you are unfamiliar with Zoom, please contact Sue and arrange a date to learn how to use Zoom.

### Paying for Events and Zoom Lectures

Each Zoom booking is £10. In-person events are priced as shown in the details. If you plan to view a Zoom lecture with more than one person, using a single laptop, PC or tablet, as a non-profit fund-raising group, we would appreciate it if you would make a booking including each viewer. You will receive email acknowledgement for each lecture booking. If you have not had an email acknowledgement by 48 hours before the training or lecture, email or call Susan to check. Tel 07831 513039. There will be no physical tickets, only the booking confirmation.

**Online:** Art Friends Warwickshire: LLOYDS, Ac number 36633668, Sort code 30 90 90. Please email Susan to confirm you are paying online and include the information required in the form below, **especially which lecture(s)**. This avoids the need to post the form below.

**By post:** send a copy of the form below or an equivalent form of wording on notepaper with your cheque, payable to Art Friends Warwickshire, to Susan Yeomans, 7 Mallory Drive, Warwick CV34 4UD.

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### Art Friends Warwickshire Event Booking

Name.....

Email Address for the lecture.....

Telephone number (home or mobile) in case of problems on the day .....

I am paying £        for ..... number bookings (check ticket price for in-person events)

Which Zoom(s)/Event(s).....

Donation or additional contribution: £.....

Dietary issues (if applicable)

I confirm that Art Friends Warwickshire is permitted to email me the Zoom joining instructions on the day before the lecture. I will not pass this link to any other person who has not booked a place.

Signed.....