

Lectures on Renaissance and Baroque Art and Architecture **by Jo Walton**

Venice – The Architecture of a Renaissance City

The waters of the Venetian Lagoon have been both saviour and enemy. Their protection enabled the city to become a magnificent Republic, a leader in global trade and a highly successful world power. All of this is reflected in the architecture her citizens created, from the delicate Gothic that so enchanted Ruskin to the elegant classicism of Palladio. Now those same waters challenge the city's very existence. This lecture covers the origins of Venice, the difficulties of building a city within the lagoon, and the idiosyncratic architecture that characterised the Venetian style. It also looks at the development of Renaissance architecture in Venice and explores the contributions of Jacopo Sansovino and Andrea Palladio.

A related special interest day looks beyond the Renaissance city to the challenges of her later history and the modern race to save Venice from the encroaching sea.

(Available in both digital and slide formats)

Donatello and the Sculpture of the Italian Renaissance

Donatello may have been born, in Florence, over 600 years ago, but his sculpture is so powerful that it still speaks directly to us today. Working alongside masters such as Brunelleschi, Ghiberti and Masaccio, he was one of the pioneers of the Renaissance and helped to change the way people looked at the world. From delicate idealism and startling realism, to the astonishing emotional force of his later works, this survey looks at the huge range of his sculpture, setting it against the vivid and colourful world of Italian politics in the age of the Renaissance.

(Available in both digital and slide formats)

A Family Affair – Florence and the House of Medici

The names 'Florence' and 'Medici' are inextricably linked with each other. From the late 1300s to 1737 the family 'advised', ruled, were exiled, returned and ruled again in Florence in continuing cycles, eventually stamping their authority on the city with authoritarian firmness. At the same time they were responsible for helping to create one of the most vibrant artistic centres of the Renaissance and beyond. This is a story filled with larger-than-life characters and great art alongside stirring historical events, occasional assassinations, and the eventual decline of a remarkable dynasty. This topic is also very popular as a special interest day.

(Available in both digital and slide formats)

Raphael; Genius of the Renaissance in Rome

Raphael died in Rome on Good Friday, 1520, aged only 37. The Pope, his most prestigious patron, was devastated and earth tremors were felt around the city. He was buried in the Pantheon – Rome's most important classical building – a fitting tribute to an artist who rivalled the greatness of the Ancients. (He was also charming, handsome, clean and polite – which couldn't be said for all Renaissance polymaths). This lecture looks at his short, but astonishing career as painter, architect, administrator and superb draughtsman and considers his lasting influence on subsequent artists.

(Available in both digital and slide formats)

From Carpenter to Count; the Rise and Rise of Andrea Mantegna

Andrea Mantegna was a remarkable artist; a brilliant painter and draughtsman, pioneering printmaker, portrait painter of rare acuity and devotee of all things classical. He was also quite capable of hiring thugs to beat up his enemies and taking anybody who annoyed him to court. Despite the drawbacks of his character, he is one of the most compelling artists of the Italian Renaissance, developing new ideas about storytelling and perspective and bridging the gap between the linear style of Florence and the painterly colourism of Venice.

(Only available as a digital presentation)

Between Angels and Devils; Botticelli and Renaissance Florence

Sandro Botticelli is now one of the most popular painters of the Italian Renaissance. His beautiful 'Primavera' and elegant 'Birth of Venus' are amongst the best known images from the Florentine Golden Age, but the times he lived in were volatile and dangerous and his art masked political turmoil and religious unease. As Florence moved from the luxurious era of the Medici to the religious austerity of Savonarola, Botticelli and his painting became caught up in this great change - but who were the angels or the devils in this story – and on which side was Botticelli?

(Only available as a digital presentation)

Bernini and Baroque Rome

Rome is a city of many glories, from distant antiquity onwards, and amongst her remarkable churches, fountains and monuments are the spectacular works of GianLorenzo Bernini. This complex, driven artist was the friend and confidant of Popes and princes, a child prodigy and a prolific, if understandably arrogant, genius. Find out about his sculpture, paintings, fountains, architecture – even plays – but also discover why such exuberance and magnificence became powerful weapons in a religious and political propaganda war.

(Available in both digital and slide formats)

Sir Christopher Wren and the English Baroque

St Paul's Cathedral has become one of the icons of Britain, from the paintings of Canaletto to photographs of the Blitz. In this lecture we look at the remarkable genius of its creator, Sir Christopher Wren: scientist, anatomist, mathematician, architect and urban planner. Set amidst the lively and vibrant period of the Restoration and the Great Fire, find out how he transformed the skyline of London and created a new language for architects in England.

(Available in both digital and slide formats)

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