

LECTURES: A Synopsis.

1. A Medieval Masterpiece: the Hotel-Dieu at Beaune.

Nicholas Rolin, one of the most powerful men in Western Europe in the 15th century, created the Hotel-Dieu at Beaune. What stories lie behind this beautiful masterpiece? What can we learn about van der Weyden's *Last Judgement* in the main ward? What light can this shed on the medieval way of life?



2. Ante-rooms of Heaven? Art in medieval hospitals.



Some of the greatest art-works in medieval and early Renaissance times were created for hospitals. In some, wayfarers, foundlings, the old and the very sick were surrounded by paintings of remarkable beauty.

This lecture explores the origins of hospitals across Europe and highlights the art created for them.

3. Back to the future: Art, Architecture and the Church in Victorian England.

Victorian England responded to massive changes in society and the world with assertive confidence, laced with a strong dose of nostalgia.

In architecture and painting these two conflicting forces gave rise to some fascinating and provocative work both in the Church and in society.

This lecture explores the lively outcomes.



4. Banks, Burgundy and Piracy: the Fifteenth Century Artists of Bruges.

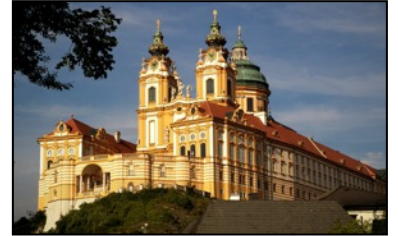
The Northern Renaissance, that great flowering of the arts in Fifteenth Century Bruges, is not very well known. And yet, the stories of banking, piracy and painting which interweave this period have exciting parallels with our own times.



This lecture places artists like Van Eyck and Memling in their turbulent context.

5. Baroque around the Clock: What is baroque art?

On the whole, British people are puzzled by baroque art; it has little purchase on our imaginations. Yet it has fascinating origins. This lecture will explore those origins and will offer particular examples from Rome and Austria, including the sumptuous abbeys of Melk and Durnstein, to enlighten us.



6. Blood, Roses and Elephants: the art and history of St Albans Abbey,



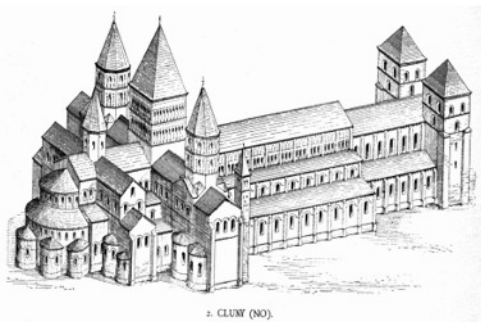
The site of the first Christian martyrdom in England has seen some fascinating developments in its 1700 year history. As a pilgrimage centre overlooking a Roman town, Verulamium, it has attracted the work of artists, architects, and book illuminators such as Matthew Parris and the Alexis Master, whose Psalter is one of the glories of medieval literature. This lecture explores the continuous liveliness of one of England's great buildings.

7. Empress Elisabeth (Sisi) of Austria: a singular and lonely beauty.

The Empress Elisabeth was one of the most beautiful women of the 19th century. Married to the Emperor, Franz Joseph, she appeared to have it all. Yet, surrounded by wealth and beauty, she became increasingly unhappy and her life ended in tragedy. This lecture explains and explores her sad but beguiling life.



8. Getting in to Good Habits: the art and influence of the Abbey of Cluny.



Cluny, an abbey in Burgundy, was once one of the major driving forces of architectural and artistic developments in Western Europe. Not much remains of its own monastic buildings, but across France and beyond, its influence in building design was massive. It helped to bring about a renaissance in the style known as Romanesque.

This lecture sets the origins of Cluny in its monastic context and traces its influence in the stunning churches of places such as Vézelay and Autun.

9. Glittering Prizes I: the mosaics of Ravenna.

The mosaics of Ravenna were created during great political turmoil. In the fifth and sixth centuries, invaders played havoc with the western Roman Empire. In spite of this, artists and church leaders created churches of astonishing beauty. This lecture looks at Galla Placidia, San Vitale and the Orthodox Baptistry.





10. Glittering Prizes II: the mosaics of Ravenna.

This lecture continues from the one above and pays particular attention to Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, the Arian baptistery and Sant' Apollinare in Classe. The clash between Arian and Orthodox Christianity was reflected in the mosaics, and the lecture reveals that trying to air-brush one's opponents out of history is nothing new.

11. Holy Poverty and Artistic Magnificence: the art of Assisi.

In the 12th century a hot-headed and saintly man, Francis of Assisi, founded a religious order dedicated to poverty. Within a year of his death, plans were laid to create one of the loveliest churches in Christendom, the Basilica at Assisi, where artists such as Cimabue and Giotto were commissioned to create frescoes of unparalleled beauty.

This lecture traces the story of Francis' life and, by exploring the work of artists, tries to explain how a movement dedicated to simplicity of life led to such an outpouring of artistic magnificence.



12. Mary Magdalene: a woman much maligned?

Biblical references to Mary Magdalene are sparse, yet she has been the subject of countless artistic representations. Some portray her as a Fallen Woman, others emphasise her vulnerability.

Her cult gave rise to Provençal legends and to the creation of Vézelay. Why has she captured the imaginations of so many?

13. Most Excellent Tree: the changing image of the Cross through the centuries.

The cross is a symbol which has had a massive effect upon the cultural and religious life of the world. From being a simple reminder for a beleaguered minority, it has become a treasured symbol for millions. Why did this happen? How have artists explored and developed its meaning?



14. Moving Pictures: The Isenheim Altarpiece.



The Isenheim altarpiece is one of the most powerful paintings in western European art. Originally created for a hospital ward in a small town south of Colmar, it explores our human experiences of suffering and hope with immense courage and vivacious intensity.

This lecture explores the complex structures of the altar-piece and explains some of its challenging iconography.



15 . Noli Me Tangere: the Resurrection in Art.

Whilst the Cross has been central to Christian iconography for centuries, the Resurrection has challenged artists from the beginning. This lecture traces the ways in which great artists have responded to stories of the Resurrection.

It is particularly appropriate at Easter, but can be used at other times as well.

16. Sunflowers et Lumière: the paintings of Vincent van Gogh.

The feverish sunshine of Provence and the golden glories of sunflowers are images indelibly associated with Van Gogh.

This lecture traces his development as an artist noticing the dark turbulence of his life as a teenager and as a young adult, and his difficult personality, but also explores how his powerful and radiant work has shaped our perceptions of the world ever since.



17. Surpassing Reality: the paintings of Jan van Eyck.

Jan van Eyck was one of the greatest artists of the Northern Renaissance. He introduced radically new styles of painting and left his peers gasping with admiration at his innovative skills and his sheer artistic genius.

This lecture looks at some of his most challenging, beguiling and enigmatic paintings.

18. The Journey of the Magi: 1700 years of the Three Kings.

From the earliest days of Christianity the story of the Three Kings has fascinated story-tellers and artists alike. This lecture traces the ways in which artists across the centuries have chosen to represent the Magi.

It is especially suitable for Christmas, but can be used at other times with equal interest.



19. Turbulence and Stillness: The paintings of Rogier van der Weyden.

In Italy during the Renaissance, one northern European artist, Rogier van der Weyden was called “Master”. It was an acknowledgement of his supreme artistic gifts.

This lecture explores many of his outstanding paintings from his enigmatic and haunting portraits to his great altarpiece at Beaune, and demonstrates why the Italian admiration for him was so well-deserved.

20. Urbino: the one-eyed Duke’s Renaissance.

Federigo da Montefeltro, the Duke of Urbino, brought to his remote, hill-town palace some of the greatest artists of the Renaissance, including Piero della Francesca.

This lecture explores how such a crafty, astute soldier of fortune created not only a breathtaking palace but also an outstanding collection of art.



STUDY DAYS

The Fifteenth Century Artists of Bruges.

Bruges was a rival to Venice for economic prosperity. Centred on the Court of the Dukes of Burgundy artists such as Jan van Eyck, Hans Memling and Rogier van der Weyden plied their trade.

This study-day explores how politics, religion, and wealth helped in the creation of superb paintings.

Three Italian cities: Ravenna, Assisi and Urbino.

From the fifth to the fifteenth century these three Italian cities exhibited flair and audacious brilliance in their artistic lives.

This study-day looks at early mosaics in Ravenna, the great artistic programmes in the churches of Assisi, and at the Renaissance collections of the Duke of Urbino.

Ante-rooms of Heaven? Art in Medieval hospitals.

Hospitals across Europe in the medieval and early renaissance period were many and varied. Some, for the well-being of their patients, commissioned art-works of remarkable beauty.

We shall explore some of the greatest of these, including the Isenheim altar-piece, the Portinari triptych in Florence, and the Van der Weyden Last Judgement in Beaune.

The Mosaics of Ravenna.

In the fifth and sixth centuries in Ravenna there was an outpouring of the most beautiful and sumptuous mosaic work. This study day will explore the mosaics that remain in the churches of the city, setting them in their political and religious context, and will also examine the origins of mosaic art in previous centuries.

Christopher Herbert. [cwherbert7@ gmail.com](mailto:cwherbert7@gmail.com)