

Gordon Russell Design Museum Design History Talks Archive

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'Sybil and Cyril: Cutting Through Time' by Jenny Uglow

In 1922, Cyril Power, a 54 year old architect, left his family to work in London with the 24 year old Sybil Andrews. They would be together for 20 years. Both became famous for their dynamic, modernist linocuts, full of movement and colour, summing up the hectic interwar years. Yet at the same time they looked back, to medieval myths and early music, to country ways disappearing from sight. In this illustrated talk Jenny Uglow explores their art and ideas, and their complicated, touching personal lives. This is a world of Futurists, Surrealists and pioneering abstraction, of machines and speed, music and sport and dazzling design, set against the Depression and the shadows of coming war.

Jenny Uglow is a biographer and historian. Her award-winning books include *The Lunar Men: The Friends Who Made the Future*, and *In These Times: Living in Britain through Napoleon's Wars*. She is particularly interested in the relation of word and image, and she has written on several writers, artists and engravers, including William Hogarth, Thomas Bewick and Walter Crane. Her last book, *Edward Lear: A Life of Art and Nonsense* won the Hawthornden Prize for 2018, and *Sybil and Cyril: Cutting Through Time* was published in November 2021.

'The Gothic Revival and the Development of the Arts and Crafts Movement' by Megan Aldrich

Gordon Russell was a twentieth-century practitioner of Arts and Crafts design, a highly influential movement that originated in Britain towards the end of the nineteenth century. The theories of William Morris and John Ruskin, who greatly influenced the development of Arts and Crafts design, are well known, but it is less well known that the writings of the Gothic Revival architect and designer Augustus Welby Pugin (1812-52) were also highly influential on later Arts and Crafts designers. This lecture explores the roots of the Arts and Crafts Movement in the ground-breaking work of A.W. Pugin.

Megan Aldrich is adjunct Professor at Richmond the International American University and a part-time tutor at the Department of Continuing Education, University of Oxford; she lectures, writes and teaches aspects of architectural and design history, including interiors and furniture, and consults in the heritage sector. Recent publications include *Antiquaries and Archaists: the past in the past, the past in the present* (Spire Books, 2009); *Art and Authenticity* (Lund Humphries, 2012); *Thomas Rickman and the Victorians* (Victorian Society, 2019); and articles in the journals of *Garden History* (2016), and *Furniture History* (2018). She is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries.

'The multiple burials of John Baskerville, printer, (1707-75)' by Caroline Archer

Baskerville, with its well-considered design and elegant proportions, is one of the world's most widely used and influential typefaces. It was created by John Baskerville (1707–75) of Birmingham, an eighteenth-century typographer, printer, and industrialist; an Enlightenment figure with a worldwide reputation who changed the course of type design.

Join Dr Caroline Archer-Parré, Professor of Typography at Birmingham City University as she reveals the story of Baskerville's unusual will, unconventional burial, and extraordinary post-mortem life.

'Percy Cane: Arts and Crafts Garden Designer' by Jill Sinclair

Now a rather forgotten name, Percy Cane (1881-1976) was once the 'go-to' garden designer for the rich and famous. In the 1950s, *Country Life* declared that he was as much in demand as Capability Brown had been. Working in an Arts & Crafts style, he attracted clients from the Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova to the last emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie. He worked on important estates such as Dartington Hall in Devon and Falkland Palace in Scotland, and on commissions in France, Austria, Greece and the USA. As well as amassing eight Chelsea gold medals, Cane wrote extensively about garden design and attracted apprentices who went on to become Modernist trailblazers. In this lecture, Jill Sinclair will trace Cane's influences, design style and significance, and explore how some of his gardens are being reinterpreted today by top designers such as Dan Pearson RDI and Tom Stuart-Smith.

Jill Sinclair is a director of the Historic Gardens Foundation (www.historicgardens.org) and a tutor on English Landscape Gardens for the University of Oxford. Educated at the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University and with a Masters from the Ingham School, Jill has written for the *Garden History* journal, *Historic Gardens Review* (including an article on Percy Cane) and a variety of other scholarly and popular publications. She is currently advising a charitable group in Sheffield on the restoration of an early Cane garden.

'Art Deco Tiles 1918-1940' by Hans van Lemmen

Art Deco was the great iconic style of the inter-war period and with its streamlined shapes, bold abstract forms and bright colours it had an enormous influence on many aspects of art, architecture and design including decorative ceramic tiles. This talk will examine the impact of this daring new style on the production and decoration of tiles and its applications in architectural settings. There will be an evaluation of the output of Art Deco tiles by firms such as Pilkington's, Carter & Co., Maw & Co., Campbell Tiles and H & R Johnson and a look at the exciting range of Art Deco tile designs created by artists like Harold Stabler, Edward Bawden, Dora Batty and Reginald Till.

Hans van Lemmen taught art and design history at Leeds Polytechnic and Leeds Metropolitan University. He is an established collector, author and lecturer on the history of tiles. He is President of the Tiles and Architectural Ceramics Society and his books include *Tiles in Architecture* (1993), *Art Nouveau Tiles* (2008), *Art Deco Tiles* (2012) and *5000 Years of Tiles* (2013).

'Marianne Straub: A Designer's Designer' by Mary Schoeser

Arriving in Bradford in 1932 to study power weaving, Swiss-born Marianne Straub (1909-1994) was to become one of Britain's most influential designer/weavers. This talk is a chance to glimpse the creative output of a handweaver committed to well-made mass-produced textiles, one who remained active until her return to Switzerland in 1992.

Her biographer, Mary Schoeser, introduces the range of her work, including the cloths she designed for Gordon Russell Ltd. Some, such as the Welsh tweeds first produced in the mid-1930s, remained favourites among the clients of the firm for over two decades, and Dick Russell is also known to have used them in his own home.

Joining Warner & Sons in 1950, she soon took up residence in Great Bardfield, Essex (where her immediate neighbours were Edward and Charlotte Bawden) and began teaching, latterly at the Royal

College of Art. Among her freelance designs were those she produced for London Underground, including one remaining in use on the Piccadilly Line until recently.

Mary Schoeser MA FRSA has been a predominantly freelance historian since 1991. Mary has written diverse publications (26 books, over 50 essays in books and over 120 shorter pieces), which include *Textiles: A concise history* (T&H: 2003), *Silk* (Yale University Press, 2007), and *Textiles: The art of mankind* (Thames & Hudson, 2012 and 2013). For nine years in the 1980s she was the Archivist for Warner & Sons, there she was introduced to Marianne Straub, co-creating a book and exhibition on her life's work in 1984. From 1991 a consultant archivist to numerous firms, her knowledge of British manufacturers extends to a sound understanding of textile and wallpaper production itself. This has facilitated restoration work with English Heritage, the National Trust and other historic property owners and also informed 36 curatorial projects, most recently a Designers Guild exhibition for the Fashion & Textile Museum in London. Extensive academic experience included a part-time research position at Central Saint Martins (2000-2011) and receipt in 2016 of an Honorary Senior Research Fellowship from the V&A Museum. President of the Textile Society, she is also Patron of the School of Textiles, Coggles Hall (www.schooloftextiles.co.uk).

'1000 years of history: Medieval Cathedrals as Time Machines' by Jon Cannon

Jon Cannon's talk traces the story of English cathedrals from the revolutionary birth of English Christianity in about 600AD, through the great rebuilding which followed the conquest to the invention of Gothic in an atmosphere of febrile change and political tension. It then follows the story through the cults and traumas of the 14th century, backdrop to England's most extraordinary architectural miracles, and into the dynamic struggles of the late medieval era: struggles which eventually tore apart the very world that created the cathedrals. Jon illustrates his talk with beautiful photographs of the buildings, contemporary manuscripts and paintings to help us understand how these events shaped their architecture.

Jon Cannon is an acknowledged expert on medieval cathedrals. His book, *Cathedral: the great English cathedrals and the world that made them* explores these monuments to history, created by a rich brew of ancient rituals, beliefs, personalities and politics – a living window on the past. Jon is also the author of *Medieval Church Architecture* which should be in the pocket of everyone who visits or explores medieval churches. Jon presented a widely praised documentary *How to build a cathedral* for the BBC. His latest work, *Stones of Britain: Geology and History in the British Landscape*, was published in 2021.

'The Arts and Crafts Movement in Cotswold Churches' by Kirsty Hartsiotis

By the time Gordon Russell opened his workshops in Broadway, the Arts and Crafts Movement had already made its mark across the region. In Cotswold churches work ranging across all disciplines can be seen by those members of the Movement who had moved to the countryside, such as Gimson and the Barnsleys, C R Ashbee and the Guild, John Coates Carter, Henry Payne – as well as work by other designers and makers like W. D. Caröe, Christopher Whall, James Eadie Reid, and more. This talk covers churches, church fittings, stained glass and memorials in Gloucestershire, and will also take in work in south Worcestershire and west Warwickshire, exploring the ideas and themes behind the church building, interventions and preservation work by members of the Movement.

Kirsty Hartsiotis is a freelance writer, speaker and storyteller, as well as the curator of the Arts and Crafts Movement collection at The Wilson Art Gallery and Museum, Cheltenham, where her last exhibition was *Ernest Gimson: Observation, Imagination and Making* (2019-20). She has a particular

interest in Arts and Crafts of the Cotswold area, and is working on a project cataloguing Arts and Crafts fixtures and fittings in our local churches. She also writes on the Private Press Movement, and is the Editor of the Society of Decorative Art Collections newsletter, a regular columnist for *Cotswold Life*, and, wearing her storytelling hat, the author of five books of local folk tales.

'Isokon and the Bauhaus in Britain' by Magnus Englund and Leyla Daybelge

In the mid-1930s three giants of the international modern movement, Bauhaus professors Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer and László Moholy-Nagy, fled Nazi Germany and sought refuge in Hampstead in the most exciting new apartment block in Britain.

The Lawn Road Flats, or Isokon Building as it came to be known, was commissioned by Jack and Molly Pritchard and designed by aspiring architect Wells Coates.

Leyla Daybelge and Magnus Englund tell the story of the Isokon from its beginnings to the present day; not only of its design and architecture but also of war, sex, death, espionage and the infamous dinner parties held there.

Magnus Englund was a resident of Jack and Molly's penthouse in the Isokon Building. He has championed the building's revival and is a trustee of the Isokon Gallery. He is also the co-founder of the popular interior design company, Skandium.

Leyla Daybelge is a journalist and TV news presenter who writes regularly for the Telegraph, among others. She was previously Head of Press for Contemporary and Design at Sotheby's. They are the co-authors of *Isokon and the Bauhaus in Britain*, which was published in March 2019 to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Bauhaus.