

SPECIAL INTEREST DAY – THURSDAY 3 APRIL 2025

To be held in the Dove Suite at The Ark, Turners Hill. Timing 10.00 - 15.00

Subject: The Art of Cornwall 1880-1975

Lecturer: Sarah Burles MA (Cantab) MA

Throughout the history of art particular places at particular times have inspired intense periods of creativity. From the late 19th century, Cornwall became a focus for a number of artists who challenged conventions, beginning with the artists' colonies at Newlyn and then Lamorna. In the 20th century, St Ives was home to British modernists such as Bernard Leach, Barbara Hepworth and Ben Nicholson who in turn inspired and were challenged by a younger generation of avant-garde artists that included Peter Lanyon, Roger Hilton, Patrick Heron and Wilhelmina Barns-Graham. This Special Interest Day will look at the work of these artists and others who lived and worked in Cornwall from the 1880s to the 1970s and explore their artistic influences, relationships and legacy.

Lecture 1 – Newlyn and Lamorna

This lecture sets the scene for the arrival of the first generation of artists to Newlyn in the 1880s and looks at the work of artists such as Stanhope Forbes, Walter Langley, Edwin Harris and Henry Scott Tuke. Stanhope Forbes married the Canadian born artist, Elizabeth Armstrong and in 1899 they established the Forbes School of Art which helped to attract a younger generation of artists to Newlyn and the nearby village of Lamorna. These included Harold and Laura Knight, Dod and Ernest Proctor, Samuel 'Lamorna' Birch, Frank Gascoigne Heath and Alfred Munnings.



Eyes and No Eyes – Frank Bramley (1857-1915)

Lecture 2 – St Ives and the Arrival of the Modernists

Artists were also attracted to St Ives from the late 19th century onwards and it may have been the presence of so many artists in the town, which encouraged the self-taught artist Alfred Wallis to begin painting in the 1920s, using household paint on scraps of cardboard. His work was championed by modernists such as Ben Nicholson and Christopher Wood who admired Wallis' authenticity. With war on the horizon in the summer of 1939, Nicholson and his second wife, Barbara Hepworth, moved to St Ives, together with Naum Gabo. They challenged the traditionalists and inspiring the next generation of artists in Cornwall.



Blackberry Gathering 1912

Elizabeth Forbes (1859-1912)

Lecture 3 – The Triumph of St Ives 1945-1975

This final lecture will chart the rise of St Ives as a centre for modern art after the war and show that it was not only Nicholson, Hepworth and Gabo who achieved international success but other artists such as Peter Lanyon, Patrick Heron, Terry Frost and Wilhemena Barns-Graham. This success led to the town becoming a focal point for post-war avant-garde art which led the eyes of the modern art world to focus, for a brief period, on St Ives.



Four Square (walk through) 1966
Barbara Hepworth (1903-1975)



Azalea Garden 1956
Patrick Heron (1920-1999)



St Ives 1943-1945
Ben Nicholson (1894 1982)