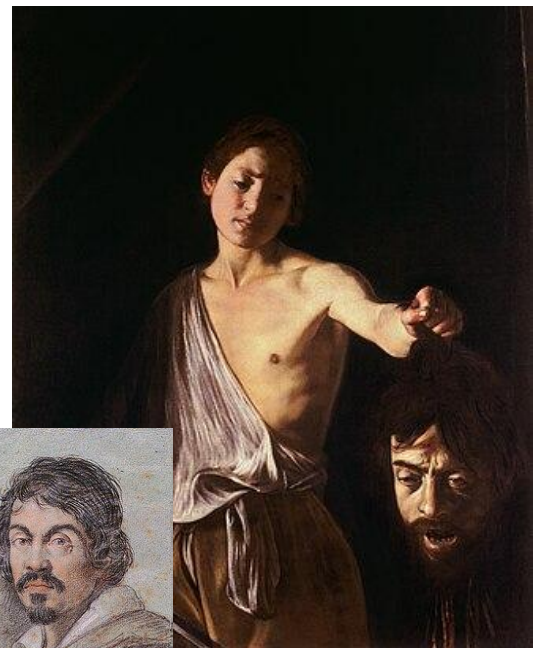
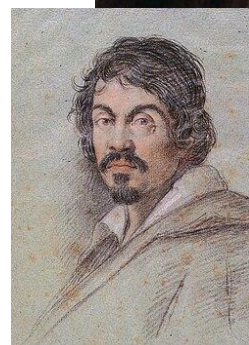
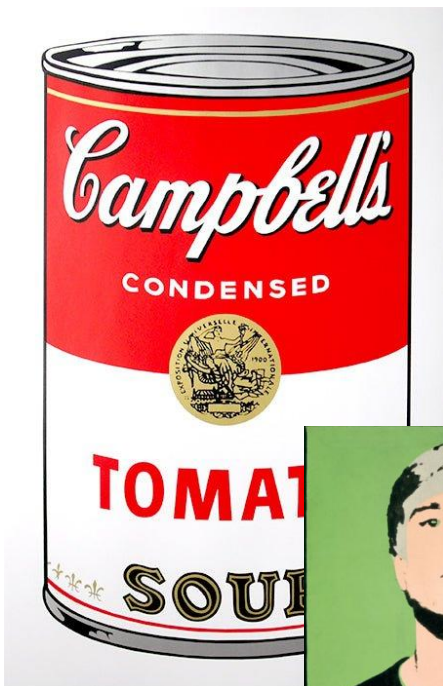


Newbury u3a 35th Anniversary



The Great Artists Group's views on 35 artists/ paintings



William Hogarth (1697-1764), painter, engraver and printer. He was an acute, and frequently satirical, observer of all levels of 18th century London society, as in 'The Harlot's Progress' and 'The Rake's Progress'.

I have chosen the Beer Street and Gin Lane engravings, contrasting the idealised society promoted by the nation's traditional drink, with the moral and physical decay associated with strong spirits. The detail in each is fascinating and, in the case of Gin Lane, horrifying. They formed part of the propaganda that helped drive social change and led to the passing of the Gin Act of 1751.



Dutch and Flemish Renaissance painter and printmaker, Pieter Bruegel the Elder (c.1525-1569), and the founder of a famous dynasty of painters. Bruegel is famous for his landscapes but also for his detailed depiction of the lives of ordinary people in those landscapes. He was an acute, and often comic, observer of the lives of peasants and the poor, with all their human follies and joys.

In 'The Fall of Icarus' he shows how the reality of one person's tragedy fails to have any impact in the wider context of everyday life. The figures of the ploughman and the shepherd are getting on with their productive lives while, almost unseen, Icarus has plunged into the sea, the victim of his own ambition.

The contrast between these figures was beautifully captured by W.H. Auden in his poem, 'Musee does Beaux Arts':

'the ploughman may
Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,
But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone
As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green
Water; and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen
Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,
had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.'



Johannes Vermeer, one of the greatest painters of the Netherlands. His most famous painting being "Girl with a Pearl Earring".

Although his paintings are from the 17th century, the colours are clear and bright, appearing like a photograph. Some of the paintings depict every day domestic life at that time, which gives an insight into what Dutch interiors were like. The characters in his paintings, mainly women, are shown doing ordinary things, such as pouring milk, making lace, playing music or reading, all dressed in clothes with vivid colours.



My first insight into the work of Anselm Kiefer was in the 1990s at Tate Briton. I took my children there, in an attempt, to educate them into the wonderful world of art. I'm not sure whether or not it was a waste of time, however, when we saw Anselm Kiefer's work, all were enthralled.

Anselm Kiefer was born in 1945 in Germany. His work mostly incorporates materials such as straw, ash, clay, lead and shellac. Themes from Nazi rule are particularly reflected in his work, seeking to process the past.

Although some of his artwork could, be considered macabre, for me, it evokes a sense of meaning and a depth of feeling for his subject. Much of his work is three dimensional and tactile. There is to be found a new discovery in every area of his paintings, which takes me on a journey that is never ending.



Lucian Freud was a painter of considerable depth. He was born in Berlin in 1922 but his family fled to England in 1933 to escape the rise of Nazism. He was the Grandson of Sigmund Freud. This connection, I find is apparent in his intense psychological influence in some of Lucian Freud's paintings.

Most of his work is emotionally charged to an extent that they can be overpowering and disturbing. He seems to have a fascination with the human form not for its' beauty and elegance but in a raw and vulnerable way, deliberately wanting to shock and amaze. Most of his subjects are not looking at the painter but to the floor with a sense of melancholia which is unsettling. He exposes the human form under the skin with such horror of colour that it screams out with pain, it's almost suffocating. I find these unnecessarily emotionally charged penetrating portraits disturbing and almost challenging to look at for more than a moment.



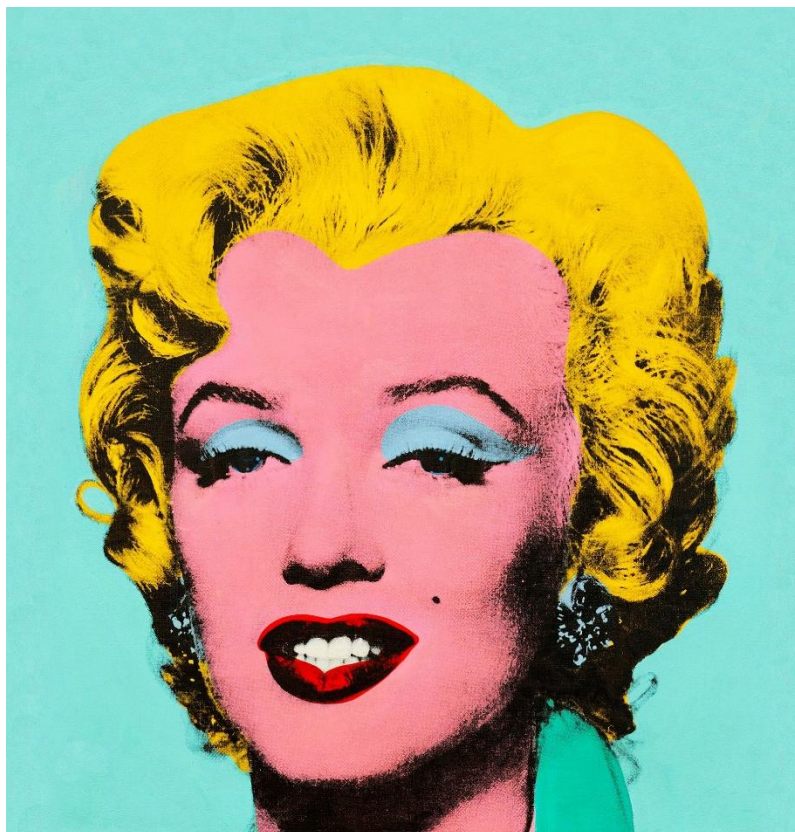
A self portrait of my favourite painter, Domenico Ghirlandaio, who taught Michelangelo. It's a detail from his beautiful "Adoration of the Shepherds." I like it because it looks so real and modern day, even down to the grimy fingernails. Amazing to think it was painted in 1485.



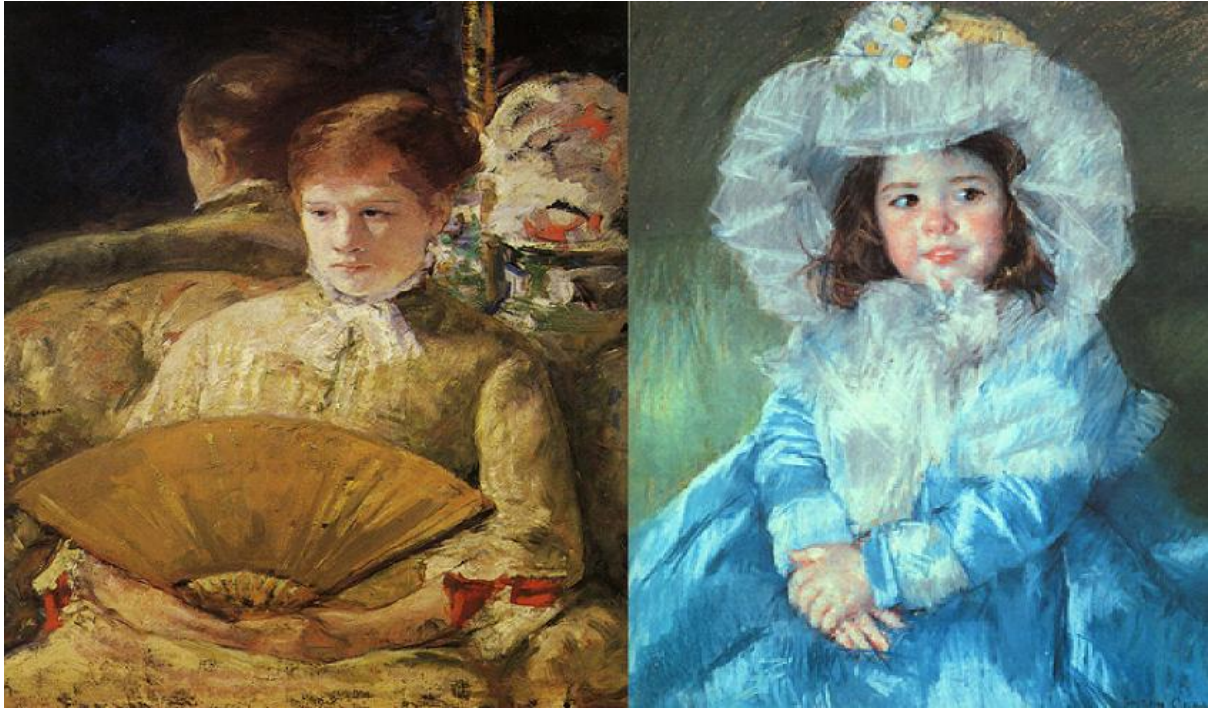
I'm afraid I do not like Mark Rothko's work. When I went to the Tate Modern and walked around his room - I was totally underwhelmed! His paintings just looked like my bad decorating!



Andy Warhol - Although I can't really appreciate his work - he certainly challenged traditional art boundaries by blurring the line between commercial design and high art!



Mary Cassatt- although a pioneer of her time I find her paintings rather boring! She really should have broken out of painting portraits.



Jackson Pollock - I have to agree with different people's views on his art work - 'mere unorganised explosions of random energy and therefore meaningless '

'This is not art- it's a joke in bad taste' Also I don't think he was a very nice person!



Three views on David Hockney

He is one of my favourite artists, although I do not like his American swimming pool paintings. However, his Grand Canyon landscapes are amazing- so vibrant! But it is his Yorkshire landscapes that really appeal to me the most! Seeing how he paints the landscapes through the changing seasons and converts to his iPad- brilliant!

I disagree with the view that the Queen's Window in Westminster Abbey is bad as I think this view of the Yorkshire countryside in Spring is wonderful!

My least favourite artist is Hockney - controversial! I used to love him but after his commission of the Queen's stained glass window in Westminster Abbey I rather went off him.

Although David Hockney is a very accomplished artist and is said to be the greatest painter of our time - after watching him being interviewed about his life and works in one of the DVD's in our meetings I am of the opinion that now he is so successful, he does not take his public seriously.



Caravaggio - huge canvasses, bold subjects, a cast of individual characters and his trademark spotlight to guide us to his focal point, looking at Caravaggio is like going to the theatre. Above all his portrayal of light, so different from Turner for example, commands my attention and I thoroughly enjoy the drama before me.



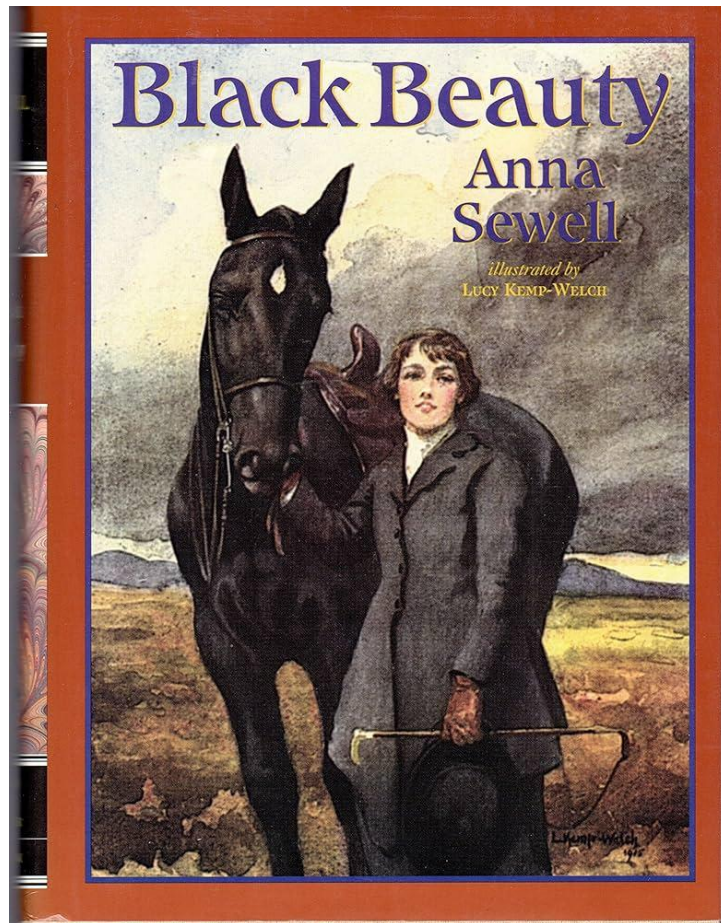
Van Gogh - because his paintings show a clear progression from his early dark works through a Damascus moment to the transformative discovery of the power of colour.

He was a tortured soul who relentlessly pursued his unique vision with little return. Although he never seen sold a painting in his lifetime, he is known throughout the world by one word... 'sunflowers'.

He developed an innovative and instantly recognisable brush technique, and I would be happy to hang his paintings in my home.



One of my favourite artists is Lucy Kemp-Welch. Amongst her accomplishments- as the water colour illustrator of Anna Sewells Black Beauty. She focuses on working horses, and the paintings on display at Bushey Museum are some of her greatest pieces.



My absolute favourite artist is Claude Monet. All his works are amazing but the best I feel are his London paintings- the views of the Thames. They are so full of light and atmosphere. When you see his large paintings, you can only marvel about how he painted them! You have to stand well back to see the full effect!



William Papas was a political cartoonist and caricaturist, book author and illustrator, and watercolourist. In the 1960s and 1970s he worked for The Guardian, The Sunday Times and Punch. His work has won international acclaim and is included in many private and corporate collections around the world. He was born 15 July 1927 (Ermelo, South Africa) and died 19 June 2000 (Hotnarko Lake, British Columbia, Canada).

This cartoon depiction of York is typical of his ability to take the key elements of a place and encapsulate the atmosphere. It is an artwork I can look at often and see something new each time. I admire his works, and this one in particular as I love the city of York.



On "Hunters in the Snow" by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, 1565. I think there's a lot of feeling in this painting, apart from the total cold. The hunters and the dogs all look so weary. And it looks like the hunt wasn't very successful. So they'll go hungry too.



Favourite painting: The Adoration of the Magi by Gentile da Fabriano, 1423, Uffizi, Florence



This altarpiece shows the journey of the Magi in three separate episodes in the background of the work, while the predella shows scenes of Christ's childhood. The main panel depicts the arrival of the Magi offering their gifts to the infant Christ.

Many extraordinary technical skills are employed including the large amounts of gold leaf which is partially embossed to help items stand out in a three-dimensional way, for example the spurs on the horseman. The three wise men are dressed in rich, fashionable garments.

The painting has been recognised as the most important example of International Gothic in Italy.

I love this painting for the storytelling, the technical skills of the artist, the use of gold leaf, the level of detail all culminating in a scene of sheer, captivating extravagance.

Another top choice: Whistlejacket by George Stubbs, c.1762, National Gallery, London

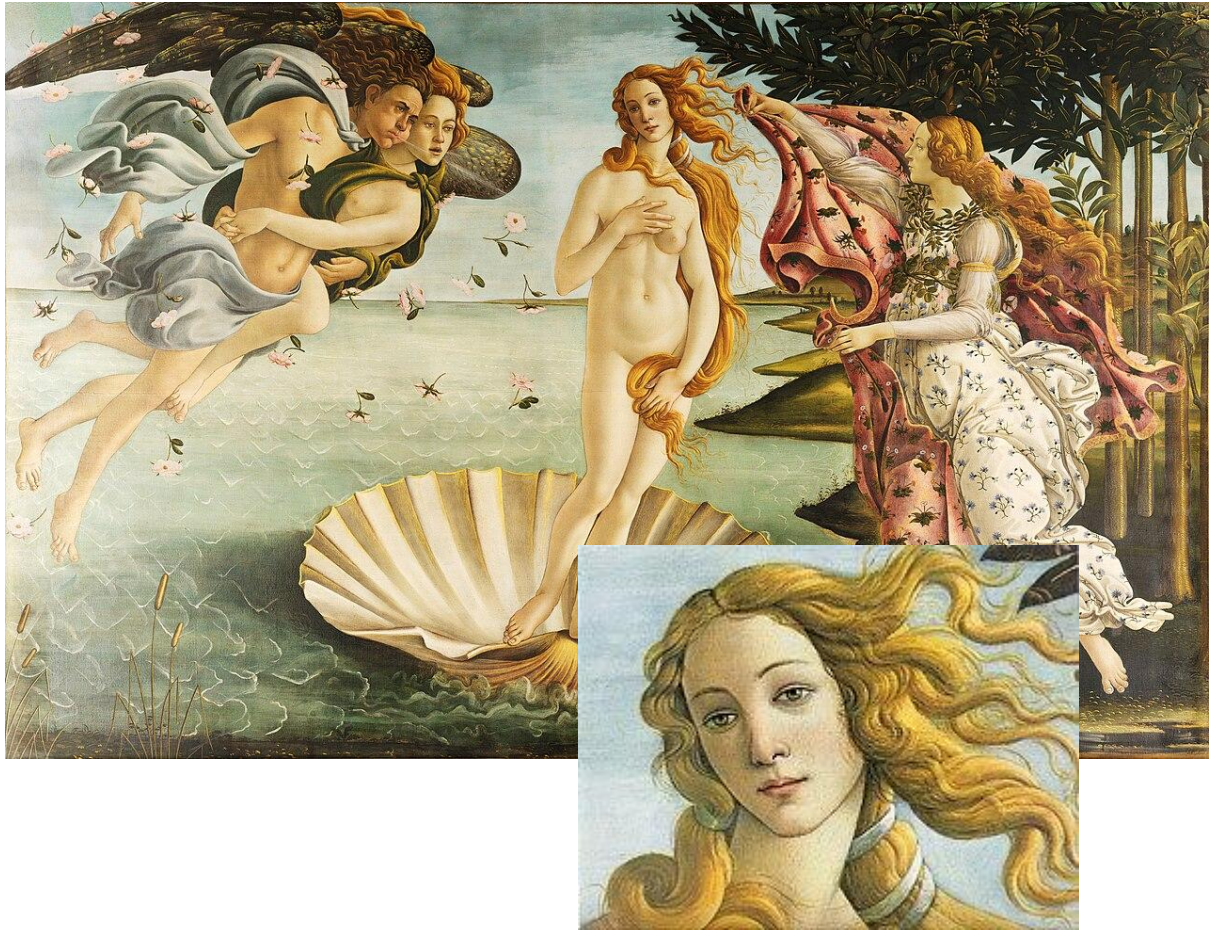


This is a life-sized stunning portrait of the Arabian chestnut stallion and former racehorse, Whistlejacket, and is widely acknowledged as Stubbs' masterpiece.

It is particularly unusual for its time in that the horse is shown free of any background, riding tack or humans so there is nothing to distract from its magnificence.

This painting is a favourite as it demonstrates Stubbs' mastery over the subject matter with the light used to accentuate the stallion's gleaming coat and its muscular physique. There is no distraction: just the pure perfection of the animal and the virtuosity of the artist.

Close up of Venus in “The Birth of Venus” by Sandro Botticelli, 1485. This painting has to be one of the most beautiful women ever painted. Venus is thought to be Simoetta Vespucci, and she can be seen in many of Botticelli’s paintings.



The Persistence of Memory by Salvador Dali, 1931 is a painting that has captivated audiences for nearly a century. It is a small canvas, only about 9.5 by 13 inches, but its impact is monumental. The painting features three mantling clocks that drape over objects in impossible ways, creating a dreamlike costal landscape. The clocks are often interpreted as a visual representation of the fluidity of time, while the barren landscape speaks to the solitude of the mind. The painting's strange forms challenge our perception of reality, making it a masterwork of surrealism.



The artist who I have been most impressed with during the last two years has been Caravaggio. Despite his unorthodox, troubled & tragic life, the quality of his work is outstanding. His use of lighting and the realistic nature of his figures is breathtaking.

His work, The Beheading of St John was the highlight of my week in Malta.



Claude Monet's Painting "The Poppy Fields near Argenteuil" produced by him in 1873.

I find it fascinating in that the two people - probably a mother and daughter - appear three times in the scene. They are in the foreground, slightly right of centre, in the middle left, in front of some trees. and in the distance, in front of the far trees.

I find this technique of multiplying the crucial subjects of the composition at different distances from the observer, an interesting technique with a fascinating result.



We have also had discussions about:

- Raphael
- Klimt
- Degas
- Edward Hopper
- Rembrandt
- Egon Schiele
- Tintoretto