

## Golden Lecture - "The Fine Art of Photography"

Sponsored by The Arts Society, Kington Langley in association with the Wessex Area Committee

Held at Hardenhuish School, Chippenham

Lecturer Brian Stater



This Golden lecture also fitted into the Hardenhuish Festival of Photography. More about this later in the article but the golden balloons and ribbons that greeted us as we arrived along with coloured co-ordinated fashion from the Art department certainly created a festival atmosphere. So we were off to a great start.

Prior to the lecture Brian showed the

audience of approximately 86 year 10, 11, 12 and 13 students from the Hardenhuish School, Oldfield School, Bath, The Corsham School and St Mary's School, Calne, two vintage cameras in use before WW2. He offered to let them have a good close up view of them after the lecture.

His initial question of "Should we accept that the very best photographs can be regarded as Fine Art?" led Brian to consider the four main themes in Fine Art; Portrait, Landscape, Still Life and The Human Condition. He then proceeded to demonstrate how photography is able to successfully respond to these topics.



Brian startled us by commencing with two images by Julia Margaret Cameron that looked extremely contemporary. These pictures could have come straight from 21st century social media or advertising. However she was a pioneering Victorian photographer well ahead of her time. He continued the portrait section with a broad range of photographers who used interesting compositions to make connections with the subject and discussing how monochrome captured mood,

The landscape section compared images by Ansel Adams and Bill Brandt. Adams, with his desire to show the perfection of the Wild West scenery with every detail of nature in sharp focus, was contrasted with the moody atmospheric almost pastel like images of Brandt's highlands

of Scotland.

Brain was excellent at making pertinent connections between images, context, and the story behind the way the image was constructed. Again in his still life section good

references were made with pictorial compositions in fine art, both in the use of the formal elements or the themes chosen.

The human condition section was also fascinating in demonstrating how light, close up and connections to place all play their part in good photography as they do in fine art.

“The same but different” was a recurring theme as Brian encouraged the students to dig behind the images and techniques. The students were engaged throughout and they had been encouraged to photograph the slides for future reference in their coursework. It was good to see just how many students were taking photos of the slides to use back at school so obviously the ideas were relevant to their studies.



The final slide of the “monkey selfie” finished the lecture on a humorous note. After over an hour of well-considered visual connections Brian brought us back his initial comment. That his young audience was the first generation who was totally immersed in using photography to document and share their lives.

Ending to sustained applause Brian was then surrounded by students who wished to handle the two vintage cameras and to question him more closely. Hardenhuish School art department were thanked for all their hard work in the preparations for the lecture and for encouraging so many other schools to attend.