

Ruskin Art Club,

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RUSKIN ART CLUB NEWSLETTER #4

FEBRUARY 2019

“What would Ruskin have made of ‘post-truth politics,’ of the richest one-percent owning almost half of the world’s wealth, of a plastic-strewn planet where climate change may be beyond repair? Maybe we should go back to him: He saw it coming.”(Scott Reyburn; The New York Times, Feb. 5, 2019)

FROM THE DESK OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GABRIEL MEYER:

Ruskin Art Club
(Founded 1888)

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Dear members and friends of the Ruskin Art Club:

The 130th Anniversary Year

As you all know, last year was a special year for the Ruskin Art Club, the 130th anniversary of its founding in 1888. Highlights of the year included Prof. William Deverell’s “Ruskin” Lecture in September, “Brash: Los Angeles in 1888” (video available on our website); a visit on the founding day, Oct. 13, to our old clubhouse, a Los Angeles City cultural monument, and now a beautifully restored Mission Revival gem at 800 S. Plymouth in Windsor Village; and last October’s full-day symposium on the work of poet, farmer, and activist Wendell Berry at USC’s Doheny Library (see Anne Petach’s notes, Page 5).

Please join us
Feb. 15, 2019, 7 p.m.
Ruskin Birthday Concert
LA premiere of
Sarah Rodgers’
“King of the Golden River”
for string quartet and tenor.
with Tenor Drake Danzler and
The Felix Quartet.
Music room of USC’s historic Hancock
Memorial Museum in the Allan
Hancock Foundation Bldg. on USC
campus .
Details on Page. 3

2019: The Ruskin Bicentennial

This year, 2019, is another even more significant year for the club and for articulating Ruskin's vision for the 21st century – the bicentennial of the birth of John Ruskin (1819-2019). In this, we are joined by our colleagues in the United Kingdom, especially the Guild of St. George, in Europe, and in Japan where has been an ongoing interest in Ruskin and Ruskin studies for more than a century.

Major exhibitions are underway this year at Two Temple Place in London (“John Ruskin: The Power of Seeing”), a York Gallery show featuring the work of Ruskin and Turner, and a major exhibition at the Houghton Library at Harvard entitled “Victorian Visionary: John Ruskin and the Realization of the Ideal.”

For a fine review of the Harvard exhibition, see link below:

<https://www.harvardmagazine.com/2019/01/john-ruskin-houghton>

The New York Times (February 5) highlights Ruskin's relevance in a very thoughtful, wide-ranging piece by Scott Reyburn entitled “*Why John Ruskin, Born 200 Years Ago, Is the Man of the Moment?*” (Quote above). Some of our esteemed colleagues and members are quoted in it, including Clive Wilmer (Ruskin Lecture 2015), Robert Hewison (Ruskin Lecture 2019) and Prof. Jim Spates.

To read the article, see the link:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/05/arts/john-ruskin-bicentennial.html>

Our planning for this major “Ruskin” year began last summer when I had the chance to have lunch (complete with orders of kedgerree, a mildly spicy Anglo-Indian colonial dish of fish, rice, and curry) with the distinguished Ruskin scholar Robert Hewison at his club in London. Hewison told me about his plan to mount a **birthday concert** on February 8, Ruskin's birthday, at the Royal Academy of Music featuring a performance of British composer/conductor Sarah Rodgers' evocative work for string quartet and tenor based on Ruskin's fairy tale “King of the Golden River.” We decided, then and there, that we'd try to coordinate the two inaugural concerts, in London and LA, as a small sign of transatlantic comradeship and mutual commencement for the rich and busy year ahead.

Against all odds, and with the indispensable help of USC's Tyson Gaskill and Prof. Lina Bahn at the Thornton School of Music, we will inaugurate our Ruskin year

with a birthday concert on **Friday, February 15, at 7pm**, (one week later than our British counterparts) **in the music room of USC's historic Hancock Memorial Museum in the Allan Hancock Foundation Bldg. on campus**. Our program will feature the LA premiere of Sarah Rodgers' "King of the Golden River" for string quartet and tenor. The Felix Quartet will be on hand as will tenor Drake Danzler, an associate professor of music and voice at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan, who performed the Rodgers' work most recently in 2016.

The Felix Quartet, composed of graduate students at the Thornton School, consists of violinists Yuqi Li and Kevin Tsao, violist Nua Kubata and cellist Allan Hon. In addition to the Rodgers' work, they will perform Mendelssohn's String Quartet #1 in E-flat major, op. 12.



In addition to the musical performances, Ruskin Art Club members Prof. Amy Woodson-Boulton,

Elena Karina Byrne, and Anne Petach will enliven the proceedings with brief readings from Ruskin and appreciations of his work. A light reception in the museum foyer will cap the evening. For campus parking locations and fee:

<https://visit.usc.edu/maps-directions/university-park-campus/public-parking/>

If one needs additional inducements, the venue itself, the Hancock Memorial Museum, is a rare LA treat. Largely unknown even on campus, it provides a classic, if slightly quirky early LA atmosphere in which to enjoy chamber music and Ruskin. Our LA history buffs will not wish to miss this! I have included a brief paragraph on the museum from a 2012 article in LA Weekly.

Four public rooms from the original 1909 Hancock Mansion at Wilshire and Vermont were installed in an anonymous-looking building on the USC campus in the 1930s to create the secret Hancock Memorial Museum at USC, which is like a life-size bell jar, featuring Edwardian architecture, marble, stained glass and ornate tchotchkes. First you have to make an appointment to see the rooms, and then you'll meet the curator, somewhat furtively, near the Newman Recital Hall. After scooting

around a marble statue of Napoleon, the curator will unlock a series of doors, turn on the lights and let you in. There is a haunted air to the surroundings, despite the sunlight pouring in through the windows — or maybe that's just how this style of decor looks to modern eyes. Either way, from the gargantuan decorative organ pipes and balcony in the music salon, to the mystical-looking Chinoiserie dining room, to the gloomy library with its carved fireplace and stern portraits, the whole experience is delightfully odd.

850 W. 37th St., University Park. , Los Angeles, 90089 (213) 740-5141, usc.edu/libraries/archives/arc/libraries/hancock/museum.

—Suzy Beal



Hancock Music Room

UPCOMING EVENTS: The Argument of the Eye

The 20th Annual Ruskin Lecture (2019)

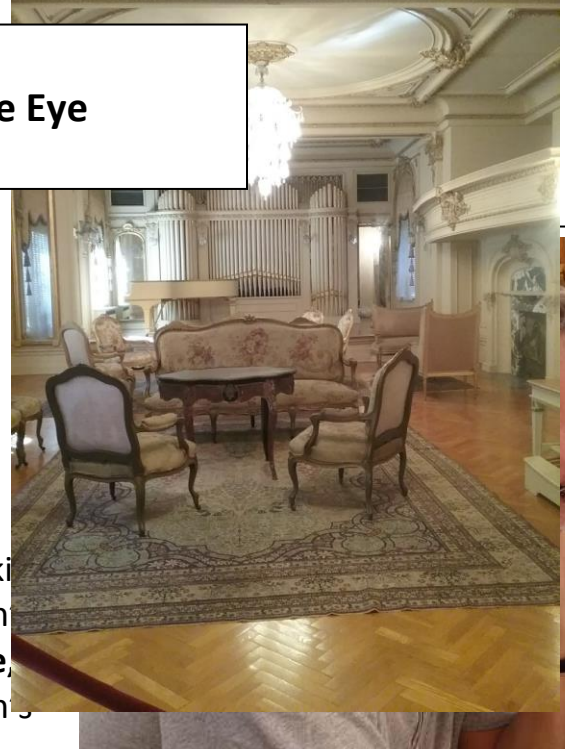
Monday, March 18, 2019

5:30 pm: Reception

and exhibition of historic materials
from the Ruskin Art Club archive at USC

6pm: Lecture

Robert Hewison, one of most distinguished Ruskin scholars in the world today, will lecture on Ruskin's aesthetic vision, "The Argument of the Eye," complete with a visual tour of Ruskin's incomparable drawings and watercolors.



I have included a link to a recent interview with Hewison in connection with the Ruskin year, one in which he mentions the Ruskin Art Club.

<https://soundcloud.com/theartnewspaperweekly/ruskin-and-gombrich-revisiting-two-art-historical-heavyweights>

See you all soon!

Gabriel Meyer
Executive Director, Ruskin Art Club



WENDELL BERRY: THE POETRY OF PLACE
JOTTINGS FROM THE OCTOBER, 24, 2018 SYMPOSIUM

Symposium Presenters:

Sara Atwood, adjunct professor in English Literature, Portland State University, director of the North American Guild of St. George, and author/lecturer on the works of John Ruskin.

David St. John, chair of the USC Dornsife College English Department and a Chancellor of the Academy of American poets.

Christopher Merrill, American poet, essayist, journalist, translator, and director of the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa.

(Very Informal notes [*interspersed with some details I looked up later*].)

After an introduction to Berry, now in his eighties, still farming, still a conservation activist, and still adding to his very considerable literary output, the Symposium continued, with readings by poets Gabriel Meyer and Elena Byrne of short selections from Berry's essay collection "*The World-ending Fire*, (2017) and

three poems from Berry's *New Collected Poems* (2012,). [*Both books, on sale at the end of the day. I've been glad I bought them*].

In her presentation, ***“Our Indispensible Humanity,”*** Atwood sketched Berry's “wholehearted vision.” As a Ruskin scholar she was drawn to similarities between Berry's and Ruskin's thinking. But, she said, Berry had not set out to be a “new Ruskin,” nor was even a ‘Ruskinian.’ Especially helpful were her slides showing paired quotes on similar topics to illustrate their similarities of thought. [*And, for me, the differences in their styles*]

Like Ruskin, Berry aims to sharpen our vision. He gave up a promising urban/academic career to farm his family's land in rural Kentucky, [*Later, reading his essay, “A Native Hill,” written several years after that choice, I found his description of the specific timeframe of his choice and the deliberateness with which he made it. He continued, “Once back, I began to see the place with a new clarity and a new understanding and a new seriousness.” The italics are his. So like Ruskin's insistence on the need for truly ‘seeing’*].

That radical choice shaped his continuing emphasis, in writing as in his life, on the importance of things local: the land itself; soil and weather patterns; farming practices; rootedness and ‘home space;’ the need for affection for the land and for neighbors; for respect and the sense of responsibility that springs from deep affection for all of these.

Atwood noted that his language is particular rather than generalized, nature-focused rather than abstract and scientific. He is a caring conservationist rather than a scientifically oriented environmentalist, an activist advocate for small-scale farming in the face of increasing national



Sara Atwood, PhD

“Our Indispensible Humanity”
will be published
by the Ruskin Art Club
later this year.

emphasis on large agribusiness, strip-mining, and abstract, scientific, statistical thinking that is remote from the experience of the real world.

His approach is generally hopeful, positive, seeing the possibility of what we can become while not sparing bluntly outspoken warnings of the consequences of continued abuse of the land and disruption of the connectedness, conviviality and bonds of the supporting farming communities. [*Berry's "It all Turns on Affection," delivered when he was honored to be Jefferson Lecturer for 2012, sums all this up. The text can be found online*].]

Christopher Merrill and David St. John contributed insights into Berry's craft as a poet, including his place in the historical flow of American poetry influenced by the cadences of hymns and ballads. He is "bit out of step with what the world expects." Is not afraid of silence. Has "an essential thread of praise and wonder

Copies of
"The World-Ending Fire,
Collected Essays," (2014)
by Wendell Berry
for sale at upcoming
Ruskin Art Club events.
\$30 Check or cash.
(Sorry, we can't take credit cards
at this time.)

and acknowledgement of mystery, . . . of deepest things that resist being talked about." Has a strong sense of the need for 'sabbathness,' taking moments to leave behind the six day world, e.g., his Sunday walks in the woods. Encourages a 'brotherhood of the eye'; is unafraid to decry war and counter with praise of manual labor. Has a sense of

decorum and formality, but can use sly metrical variations to sharpen a point.

He tends to simple word choices, using complex, multi-syllabic words sparingly, keeping them for a twist of meaning or emphasis. And often ends lines with single-syllable words. One must be alert to his internal rhymes. "As a farm-bred poet he is tender with his syllables, lets them ripen in silence. He doesn't "throw syllables upon just any wind, husbands the seeds, sows slowly, spaces them apart in rows to give them room to spread in the listeners heart, gives them air and light and silence." [*YouTube has many interviews and conference featuring Berry.*]

Hearing his unhurried Southern cadence suggests to me the best pace at which to read it for myself].

The Symposium closed with a showing of the 80-minute documentary portrait of Wendell Berry: **Look and See** that extended and visually reinforced the spoken presentations. *Film details:* <https://lookandseefilm.com/watch-the-film/>].

- The Berry Center in Newcastle, Kentucky, <http://berrycenter.org/> continues to advocate for small scale farming.

**We invite you to join in promoting
the vision and programs
of the Ruskin Art Club through an annual
Individual, Family, or Patron membership
or by becoming a Life time Member.
For more information or to join online:
www.Ruskinartclub.com/membership/,
or contact Executive Director,
Gabriel Meyer: grmncr@aol.com (310)640-0710**

For news of Ruskin Art Club events
see: www.ruskinartclub.com
&
<https://www.facebook.com/RuskinArtClub>