

# Ruskin Art Club

founded 1888

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[www.RuskinArtClub.org](http://www.RuskinArtClub.org)

## Ruskin Art Club (Founded 1888)

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*“We seek in the arts, in Nature, and in the mysterious power of beauty, the instruments not only of personal transformation, but, in the spirit of John Ruskin, of the transformation of the physical, social, and cultural landscape of our world.”*

- Ruskin Art Club

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## **FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: GABRIEL MEYER**

### ***“The Ruskin Revival”***

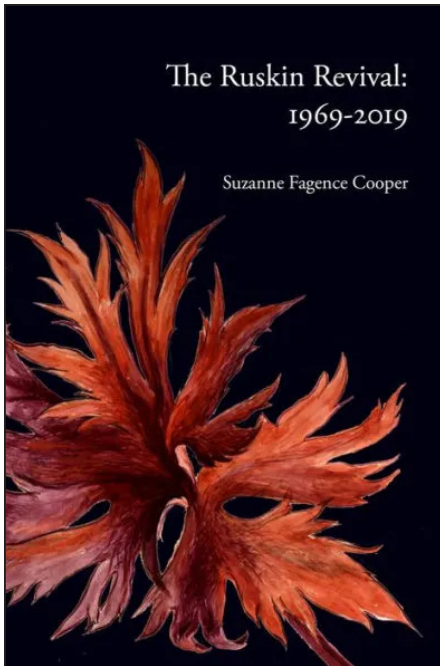
Summer, at least here in Southern California, is being atypically coy this year. So far, it is a suggestion rather than a season. Perhaps, by the summer solstice, it will have gathered its forces and put in an official appearance.

(As a matter of fact, it did. Summer, thankfully, is in session.)

Beach weather or no, there are always the summer reading projects. And we at the Ruskin Art Club, in this summer issue of the newsletter, are prepared with a few Ruskin-related titles to add to your list. (See Sara Atwood’s review below.)

One always has a particular fondness for books that have happy endings. Art historian Suzanne Fagence Cooper’s chronicle of *The Ruskin Revival:1969-2019* (Pallas Athene, London) traces in detail the rise of contemporary interest in Ruskin, and some of the major figures –scholars, collectors, arts administrators, curators, philanthropists – who fostered and shaped this remarkable and surprising development.

Surprising – because Ruskin, while still a thinker to be reckoned with in the early 20th century, had been assigned to the Hades of irrelevance by post-World War I modernism and by generations who wanted nothing to do with



Victorian idealism. British art historian and broadcaster Kenneth Clark, in the 1950s, lamented that “for almost fifty years, to read Ruskin was accepted as proof of a possession of a soul.” By the 1960s, with a few exceptions, Ruskin would have been considered a marginal figure, and serious study of his works an eccentric pursuit.

As Fagence Cooper tells it, it took a week in March 1969 to begin to change all that. Veteran Ruskin scholar and guardian of the seminal Whitehouse collection of Ruskin manuscripts, correspondence and drawings, James Dearden (1931-2021) had the happy inspiration to invite a group of Ruskin scholars and enthusiasts to Ruskin’s estate at Brantwood in the Lake District to hold a week-long conference on Ruskinian themes.

Key participants included Dearden, Robert Hewison, Catherine Williams, Hal Shapiro, Sam Brown and Al Cate from the US, Pierre Fontaney from

France, and Masami Kimura from Japan.

“There were papers on Brantwood and local history,” writes Fagence Cooper, “on Ruskin’s travels, his art criticism, his influence overseas, comparisons with other eminent Victorians, and the development of the Guild of St. George” – Ruskin’s charity founded in 1871 and then itself going through something of a revival. “Through the lens of this conference, we can see the strands of Ruskin scholarship that were beginning to open out as well as the gaps.”

In addition to reading papers, participants also “roughed it” at Brantwood, still in the grip of the biting cold of early spring and the vicissitudes of deferred maintenance. As several participants have since remarked, Brantwood rooms boasted frost on the insides of window panes. Still, delegates warmed themselves with late-night conversations, whisky, and hopes for future efforts to consolidate Ruskinian collections and inspire scholars to invest themselves in Ruskin studies.

More concretely, the weekend ended with the decision to establish an informal grouping, the Ruskin Association, that would provide a forum for these efforts through a regular newsletter.

Simultaneously, pioneering American scholars, such as Van Akin Burd (1914-2015), John D. Rosenberg (1929-2019), and George Landow (1940-2023) were in the early stages of adding their own individual contributions, largely on the basis of American Ruskin collections, to what would eventually evolve into a trans-Atlantic revival of Ruskin studies. We would be remiss if we failed to mention the earlier work of the American Ruskin scholarly pioneer Helen Viljoen (1899-1972). Rosenberg’s anthology, *The Genius of John Ruskin*, along with the biographical study, *The Darkening Glass*, both still in print, appeared in the early 1960s; Van Burd Akin’s *The Winnington Letters* in 1969, and Landow’s *The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin* in 1972.

***“The Ruskin Revival” by Gabriel Meyer — Continued***

“The conference is remembered by many of those who attended as a turning point in Ruskin studies,” Fagence Cooper writes. And so it proved. In addition to broadening the scope of Ruskin studies to embrace the polymathic range of his interests – art, architecture, social reform, ecology, natural science, political economy – the generation of scholars that met at Brantwood in 1969 dedicated themselves to the unglamorous tasks of ensuring the cataloging, and integrity of the invaluable Whitehouse collection, now housed at The Ruskin at Lancaster University; the renewal and refurbishing of Brantwood as an historic site accessible to the public, and the consolidation and care of the Guild’s remarkable Ruskin holdings. Above all, the scholars who labored in the fields in the late 20th century struggled to preserve and secure Ruskin’s material legacy for the generations that would follow. Needless to say, the past cannot offer a greater gift to the future than this.

Fagence Cooper wisely chooses to close her chronicle of rediscovery and renewal with a similar nod both to future and to past:

“This continued sense of having more to say is Ruskin’s greatest legacy. For those who read his words, or walk his paths, there is always something new to discover in the world. We learn to look down, or up, or ahead with him in mind. His gift to the future, in Brantwood, Lancaster and beyond, is ‘his magnificent enthusiasm . . . unselfishness of sacrifice . . . and finally, a profound sympathy with the fulness and wealth of the material universe.’”

***Gabriel Meyer is the Executive Director of the Ruskin Art Club of Los Angeles***

**ROBERT HEWISON TURNS 80**



I listed Robert Hewison among the participants in the benchmark 1969 March Conference at Brantwood. Hewison has gone on to become arguably the greatest living Ruskin scholar. He turned 80 on June 2. Independent Ruskin scholar Stuart Eagles, a student of Hewison, has given us permission to publish here his personal tribute to Robert on the occasion of his birthday; but I also wish to add this brief encomium to the mix.

Robert Hewison's *The Argument of the Eye* (1976) was one of the first books I read about Ruskin. I have been grateful for this blessing ever since. By then, twenty-five years ago, there were dozens of studies available to inform or bewilder the newcomer to Ruskin. What I found in Robert's study was an orientation to the whole of Ruskin – namely, that Ruskin's work, in all its myriad forms, constitutes, first and last, a search for what it means to see.

**“. . . Perception does not depend on the eye alone, and Ruskin, speaking in nineteenth-century language of the relation between physiology and psychology, stresses that ‘the physical splendour of light and colour, so far from being the perception of mechanical force by a mechanical instrument, is an entirely spiritual consciousness, accurately and absolutely proportioned to the purity of the moral nature, and to the force of its natural and wise affections.’ Mind and eye work together . . .”**

***The Argument of the Eye, pg. 211***

Confronted with 39 volumes in the Library Edition of Ruskin's Works and a bewildering array of genres, such insights are worth their weight in gold. In addition, Robert's judicious temperament, his profound good sense, on full display in his writings on Ruskin, made the reader trust him. Many early accounts of Ruskin, understandably, were written by partisans, wielding the pen against indifference, defending the Master's reputation against careless speculations. While Robert ably argued the case for Ruskin's importance, he has never failed, in a long and productive career, to let Ruskin be Ruskin – Ruskin, unedited, as he is, with rough edges and quirks as well as towering insights – insights, he notes, that were part of a process, always alive, always evolving.

These impressions, fed by years of reading Hewison's shelf of Ruskin studies (on Venice, Turner, Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites, Giotto, Ruskin at Oxford, Ruskin's contemporaries, etc.) were both confirmed and enriched by coming to know Robert personally over the past few years. Robert delivered our Ruskin Art Club "Ruskin" Lecture in the bicentennial year, 2019 (see our YouTube channel, [www.ruskinartclub.org](http://www.ruskinartclub.org)), and the two of us got to know each other tooling about Los Angeles, visiting libraries and galleries, and treating ourselves to nonstop conversations about Ruskin for several memorable days. More recently, Robert and his wife Erica hosted me and my research assistant during a stay in the UK in 2022, where the round of breakfasts, leisurely dinners, and Ruskin continued.

Cheers and blessings, Robert, on your birthday, and to the wealth that is Life with "all its powers of love, of joy, and of admiration."

“Sat in a former public toilet in west London which had been conveniently converted into an Italian restaurant, Robert asked me what interested me intellectually beside Ruskin. After listening carefully to my rambling reply he enthused that ‘Dickens, Ruskin and Victorian political economy’ would make a fruitful subject for a dissertation. Such perspicacious synthesis is characteristic of the invaluable guidance he has helpfully and generously provided ever since. His vital critical engagement with my work towards an MA degree, and his constant encouragement, not only saw me across the finishing line, but took me up to Oxford.

I was an undergraduate when I first met Robert and attended the illuminating seminars in Literary Modernism he led at Lancaster University with the energy, passion and flair that are his hallmarks. Each week he appointed a student to summarise the next lecture.

Except, of course, the first time. The introductory lecture had been given by Robert himself and he selected me *post hoc* to give the summary. I managed somehow and we seemed to understand each other from the start. I was always impressed by the detailed, challenging, good-humoured and purposeful one-to-one and face-to-face feedback he gave students on their work.

Robert is an original thinker, a first-rate writer, a consummate lecturer, a dedicated teacher and an outstanding Ruskin scholar. From the critical insights of *The Argument of the Eye* to the meticulous and comprehensive analysis of *Ruskin on Venice*, and in numerous essays, exhibitions and broadcast interviews, Robert has explained with exemplary lucidity Ruskin’s heritage, motivations, ideas, art, religion, politics, projects, legacies and limitations in terms of people, places and institutions.

I owe him a debt of gratitude greater than I can describe. It is a privilege to call him my friend and an honour to wish him a very happy 80th birthday.”

- Stuart Eagles

**NEWSLETTER ESSAY:**

“Munstead Wood, a masterpiece of Arts and Crafts, is acquired by the National Trust”

by Louis Jebb



*A sense of discovery: the house at Munstead Wood, by Edwin Lutyens, seen from the woodland garden created by its owner, Gertrude Jekyll. (credit: Megan Taylor/National Trust)*

Government funding helps acquire Surrey house and garden that launched the global careers of the architect Edwin Lutyens and the garden designer Gertrude Jekyll, whose home it was for nearly 40 years.

Munstead Wood, the celebrated Arts and Crafts house and garden in Surrey, has been acquired by the National Trust, the charity for the preservation of historic houses, gardens and landscape, with financial aid from the British government, “for the enjoyment of all”.

The house and garden, an integrated Gesamtkunstwerk of world importance where house and garden are subtly but inextricably linked, was created by the architect Edwin Lutyens for, and with, his client and mentor Gertrude Jekyll. It had been for sale, at an asking price of £5.25m following the death in March 2022 of its owner Marjorie Clark. Clark, and her husband Robert Clark—a leading banker in the City of London who himself died in 2013—renovated the house and garden over half a century after acquiring the place in the mid-1960s. They had for many years made the garden available to groups of visitors. It was, Robert Clark once said, “the best investment I ever made”.

***“Munstead Wood, a masterpiece of Arts and Crafts, is acquired by the National Trust” by Louis Jebb — Continued***

The National Trust said it had acquired the house through a private sale and that it “has begun fundraising to support the restoration and reimagination of the garden and house”. The trust said it “is working with the local community and partners to develop plans on the best way to open the property to visitors in future”.

The special quality of Munstead Wood lies in the tight and graduated integration between the wood, woodland garden, herbaceous borders, paving and—all at the same level—the ground floor of the house which is built in local materials, Surrey brick and Bargate stone, and placed in its woodland setting as if to be discovered by chance rather than design. The sense of discovery continues into the ground plan of the house, full of unexpected turns and vistas. Everything is a gradual reveal, and the aesthetic both inside and out is heightened by Lutyens’s early artistic mastery of the fall of light across masonry, smooth carving and deep set windows.



*Books by Gertrude Jekyll at Munstead Wood.*

*Her work as writer, journalist, seed merchant, florist, and garden designer helped fund the upkeep of house and garden.*

*(credit: Megan Taylor / National Trust Images)*

The house was completed in 1896 to designs by the 27-year-old Lutyens for his mentor Jekyll, a formidable, writer, artist, historian of crafts and country life horticulturist, and garden designer. In 1886 she had acquired its site, 15 acres of unpromising Surrey heathland, and planted a wood in which she developed her own form of informal gardening, and placed a series of practical buildings for writing—she was a serial contributor to *Country Life* magazine and a producer of books on gardening, craftwork and buildings—and the selling of seeds and flowers. Munstead Wood was always a working place for Jekyll, funded additionally by her books and journalism.

In 1889 she met Lutyens, already a prodigious talent, all of 19, with a retentive memory for the architectural detail of local building in Surrey, where he had spent childhood summers. It was a meeting that made him as an architect. The austere, almost monastic, Jekyll aesthetic and sense of “rightness” fed into his work as a builder of romantic, vernacular buildings, but also, in later years as a master of classicism responsible for masterpieces including the starkly castellated Castle Drogo, in Devon, the great war graves spread across the killing fields of Flanders and Normandy, the imperial capital at New Delhi and his great unfinished design for the Catholic cathedral in Liverpool. Lutyens in turn offered Jekyll a whole new avenue of work as a garden designer to a fashionable clientele (work that helped pay for the upkeep of house and garden), usually in league with Lutyens in the country house practice that he built in the late 1890s and 1900s on the back of their collaboration at Munstead Wood.

Jekyll herself was a crucial figure in the history of the Arts and Crafts movement. A talented amateur artist, she had attended lectures by both John Ruskin—the intellectual founder of the movement—and William Morris, the master of applying the movement’s principles in decoration and interior design. When she once

suggested to Ruskin that she might build a house in Surrey decorated with marble, he insisted that she looked instead at whitewash and tapestry as her aesthetic. It was a life-changing moment that later influenced the aesthetic of Munstead Wood itself but also a series of masterpieces on which Lutyens and Jekyll collaborated including the restoration of Lindisfarne Castle (1906) and Lambay Castle, Co Dublin (1908-10) and a new house, Deanery Garden, for Edward Hudson, proprietor of *Country Life* magazine, a crucial figure in promoting the work of Lutyens and Jekyll.



*William Nicholson’s 1920 portrait of Gertrude Jekyll in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery, London.  
(credit: Ian Dagnall Computing /Alamy Stock Photo)*

The sophisticated sense of geometry, and play with the segments of a circle, that Lutyens developed at Munstead Wood, in both the planning and the elevation of archways and lintels, fed through into 50 years of subsequent work. The arc of a circle is fundamental to his most sophisticated, almost abstracted designs: the Cenotaph in Whitehall—whose apparently straight elevations meet in the junction of their arched sides miles above ground—and the stepped arches of the war memorial at Thiépvall and, on an even more massive scale, in the great unbuilt aisles of Liverpool Cathedral.

Another noted Lutyens work in Surrey, Goddards, is maintained by the Landmark Trust, the charity that restores smaller historic buildings and lets them to its members as holiday accommodation, and is the home of the Lutyens Trust, the charity dedicated to research and education on the architect’s work.

Munstead Wood and its owner had close ties to artists of the day. Helen Allingham left distinctive watercolours of Munstead Wood, including the famous summer herbaceous border, 200 feet long and 14 feet deep. William Nicholson left two indelible portraits of Jekyll: a powerful 1920 portrait in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery—left to the gallery in 1947 at the express wish of Lutyens, who had died in 1944—and a delightful portrait of her gardening boots painted, according to legend, because Nicholson had difficulty in getting the ever entrepreneurial and creative Jekyll to sit still long enough for him to capture her likeness.

When Robert and Marjorie Clark bought Munstead Wood in the 1960s, 30 years after Jekyll’s death, many of its borders and rockeries had been grassed over as an economy. Many of the wood’s finest trees were destroyed in the great storm of October 1987, revealing some of the original elements of the garden, after which the Clarks’ then head gardener, Stephen King, suggested removing the grassed over areas and restoring Jekyll’s full design, both close to the house and through into the surrounding wood. This project was superbly executed by King and has been carried on by Annabel Watts, the leading expert on the history of the house and garden and head gardener at Munstead Wood for 20 years.

*Courtesy of The Art Newspaper (Umberto Allemandi & Co. Publishing Ltd., London, New York 2023)*

<http://www.theartnewspaper.com>.



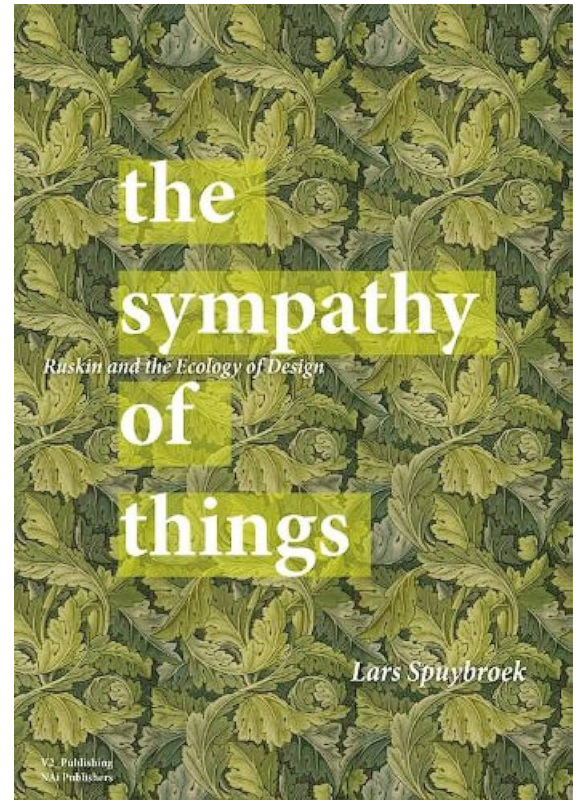
## NEWSLETTER REVIEW:

Lars Spuybroek, *"The Sympathy of Things: Ruskin and the Ecology of Design"*

(Rotterdam: V2 Publishing, 2012), 399 pp.

by Sara Atwood

When Dutch architect and theorist Lars Spuybroek's *The Sympathy of Things* was published in 2012 I was eager to read it and happy to review it for *The Ruskin Review and Bulletin*. I was intrigued by Spuybroek's aim—to adapt Ruskin's ideas to the field of digital design. Spuybroek teaches design methodology and aesthetic theory at the Georgia Institute of Technology, where he is Professor of Architecture. He is the architect of various electronic public artworks in the Netherlands and has exhibited at the V&A, the Venice Biennale, and the Centre Pompidou. It was heartening to find someone with his expertise and experience engaging with Ruskin and thinking about his principles in a modern context. Yet I was also wary; given the value Ruskin places on the work of the hands, I thought it unlikely he would embrace digital design were he alive today. Having read the book, I was conflicted. Drawn to Spuybroek's originality and energy, his sensitivity to Ruskin's belief in interconnectedness and relation ("the sympathy of things"), I was also puzzled by his eccentricity and occasional obscurity. Passages of thoughtful insight into Ruskin's thinking alternated with what I then considered an overheated exuberance. I was skeptical of his vision of digitally generated William Morris carpets and uncertain what he meant by describing a day in which "we can see objects forming like pools of mud, flowers on a wall or clouds in the sky, as pure products in a context of pure productivity, without any intermediaries" (Spuybroek 333). "As much manifesto as argument," I wrote in my review, "*The Sympathy of Things* is insightful, often (and sometimes refreshingly) eccentric, ambitious and occasionally infuriating, but above all—whether one agrees or disagrees with the author's arguments—it has the merit of making one think in new ways."<sup>1</sup>



Eleven years on, I stand by this assessment, but find that I now have a better understanding of Spuybroek's project—to open new, unexpected channels by which Ruskin's ideas might shape the modern world—and a new receptiveness to his ahistorical, elliptical approach. I'm less of a Ruskin purist today, more willing to question and experiment with his ideas. What I failed to see in 2012 was that whether Ruskin would approve of digital

<sup>1</sup>Atwood, Sara. Review of Lars Spuybroek, *The Sympathy of Things*. *The Ruskin Review and Bulletin*. Vol. 8 No. 2.

design *isn't the point*. What matters is Spuybroek's attempt to map Ruskin's principles onto an entirely new landscape, to demonstrate that Ruskin's ideas are rich enough, flexible enough, to meaningfully shape not only the art of today but the art of the future. Spuybroek observes that there are two ways of “revitalizing a historical figure” (7)—to double down on the historical by emphasizing and developing links with contemporaries or “to wrest the figure from history, to see whether you can filter out the typical statements of the day and discover what is left on the table, and, out of these parts, construct a creature we can recognize as one of our own, while hoping you are not creating a ghost version of the original” (7). This approach is both radical *and* Ruskinian. It was Ruskin's practice to put figures from the past in dialogue with one another and with the present. As Proust noted, Ruskin lived “in a sort of fraternal society with all the great minds of all times, and since he is interested in them only so far as they can answer eternal questions, there are for him neither ancients nor moderns, and he can speak of Herodotus as he would of a contemporary.”<sup>2</sup>

Spuybroek's primary concern is to broaden the scope and quality of digital design by restoring beauty and ornament. Using Ruskin as a guide, he aims to create “an aesthetics of tenderness and sympathy” (78). He wants to “update” (7) Ruskin, not rewrite him. Citing the ‘excommunication’ of ornamentation in the Modernist period, Spuybroek writes that “the age of intelligent machines allows us to return to ornament” (141) and to reject uniformity in favor of ornamentation:

**Contrary to the notion of an avant-garde, digital technology is taking us back in time, to the Ruskins and the Darwins, or, more generally, to the unique and the contingent, and, in a way, back to craft. We should reject both the default futurism associated with technology and the default historicism associated with ornamentation . . . . Let us see a way to send our postmodern tools back to premodern times.**

*The Sympathy of Things, pg. 142*

For Spuybroek, this kind of “technoromanticism” (143) is a necessity, a way of renewing design and reversing the aesthetic malaise induced by the minimalism and sterile abstraction of modernism. Spuybroek maintains that abstraction is “cruel and perverse” (133) because it wants to expose everything, whereas “feelings of tenderness are impossible unless we see something in the making” (133), dressed and ornamented. The vital ‘changefulness’ of ornament (Spuybroek uses Ruskin's term) can rescue us from a “vast universe of smooth, polished objects” (75) that fail to engage our feelings. “[W]hat needs to be established in ornament is simply a relatedness between us and things,” Spuybroek declares, “*a fundamental sympathy*, which all design starts from. Such sympathy is only possible because of ornament. Ornament is an absolute condition for all things to be felt with the same immediacy as they are seen” (128). Spuybroek's vision aligns with Ruskin's perception that things exist in entanglement and their relation is defined by sympathy.

<sup>2</sup> Proust, Marcel. “Preface to John Ruskin's Bible of Amiens.” *On Reading Ruskin*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1987.76.

**Lars Spuybroek, “The Sympathy of Things: Ruskin and the Ecology of Design” by Sara Atwood — Continued**

Spuybroek points to Ruskin’s powerful vision of the interdependence and vitality of all things. Speaking about Gothic architecture, Ruskin declares “It is not enough that it has the Form, if it have not also the power and the life.”<sup>3</sup> For Spuybroek, as for Ruskin, this vital power is expressed in the flowing, foliated forms of the Gothic. In its seemingly “continuous urge to mutate” (32), its channeling of force into form, its intertwining, patterning, and weaving, the Gothic is for Spuybroek inherently digital in nature, reflecting the logic of code. According to Spuybroek, digital design’s limitless richness of pattern and ornament is a modern analogue of Ruskin’s Gothic.

“We want to go back,” Spuybroek says, “but not via history” (142). The sort of Ruskin-inspired digital design he envisions will not be imitative—mere digital Arts & Crafts—but innovative. It will meld past and present, “bastardize and hybridize” (143), to create a new-old design that centers ornament and feeling, beauty and meaning, but embodies these elements in novel forms via modern methods. *The Sympathy of Things* is exciting and dynamic. We needn’t agree with all of Spuybroek’s arguments to see that he offers us an original approach to Ruskin’s ideas and an awareness of the ideas themselves as changeful and alive.

<sup>3</sup>Ruskin, John. *The Works of John Ruskin (Library Edition)*. 39 vols. Ed. E.T. Cook & Alexander Wedderburn. London: George Allen, 1903-1912. 10.183.

## UPCOMING EVENTS: JULY 2023

### **Private Ruskin Art Club Tour (in-person) of Apricot Lane Farms, Moorpark**

*Friday, July 21st, 9am PDT.*



*Apricot Lane Farms, Moorpark*

This two-hour walking tour of one of the Southland’s most innovative ecological farms is open to the public (non-members are welcome). Apricot Lane Farms was founded in 2011 by John and Molly Chester, and today spans 234 acres of countryside in Moorpark, California, just 40 miles north of Los Angeles. Apricot Lane Farms regeneratively grows more than 200 varieties of fruits and vegetables, and raises sheep, cows, pigs, chickens and ducks with care and respect, while working in

harmony (or a comfortable level of disharmony) within our dynamic ecosystem. For more information about the farm and its working philosophy, visit their website: <http://www.apricotlanefarms.com>.

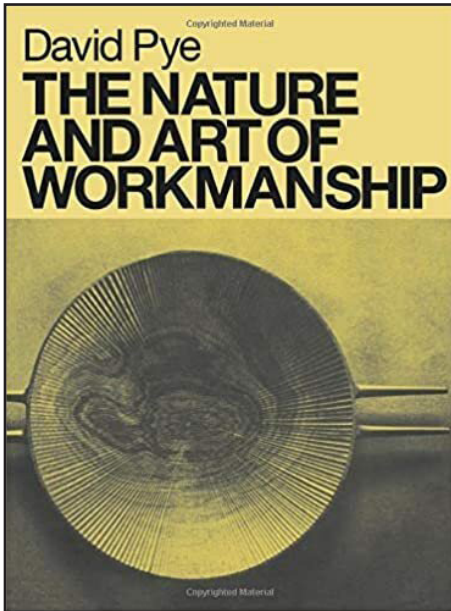
We will tour all aspects of the farm with staff. Open-air transportation will be provided for those who do not wish to walk. \$35 per person: Paid online at our website (under donation) [www.ruskinartclub.org](http://www.ruskinartclub.org) or by check to: Ruskin Art Club, 200 S Avenue 66, Los Angeles, CA 90042, earmarked Apricot Lane Tour.

**AUGUST 2023**

**Virtual Presentation: “The Nature of Art and Workmanship” by David Pye**

with W. Patrick Edwards

*Thursday, August 10th, 5pm PDT.*



Patrick owns a successful restoration and furniture making company Antique Refinishers in San Diego. In 2000, he opened the American School of French Marquetry to share the expertise he gained in Paris at the Ecole Boulle with fellow American woodworkers. He has long been a champion of the artisan philosophy of David Pye.

In this thoroughly mechanized age, what is the point of craft? Does it make any sense to work with hand tools when machines can do the same job faster, and in many cases better? What visual richness do we lose by embracing a mass-produced world?” “The Nature and Art of Workmanship explores the meaning of skill and its relationship to design and manufacture. Cutting through

a century of fuzzy thinking, David Pye proposes a new theory of making based on the concepts of ‘workmanship of risk’ and ‘workmanship of certainty’.

For news of Ruskin Art Club events, especially our new season of **in-person & virtual programs, lectures, and field trips**, visit us at:

**[www.RuskinArtClub.org](http://www.RuskinArtClub.org)**  
**Ruskin Art Club on YouTube**

**SEPTEMBER 2023**

**In-Person: The 23rd Annual Ruskin Lecture at Doheny Library (USC)**

**“Mariana at Work”: Ruskin and Gender**

with Prof. Dinah Birch

*Tuesday, September 12th, 5pm PDT.*

This is an in person (open to the public) event that will be live streamed at Doheny Library, with a reception and exhibition of Ruskin Historical Documents in the Feuchtwanger Room (4pm).

Dinah Birch, CBE, is an English literary critic. Emeritus Professor of English Literature at Liverpool University, she has edited two books on Ruskin, *Ruskin and Gender* (2002) and *John Ruskin: Selected Writings* (2004). Birch served as the general editor of the 2012 edition of the *Oxford Companion to English Literature* (2012).

Ruskin’s writing on women was complex, and sometimes contradictory. Something similar may be said of his far-reaching influence, both in his lifetime and since. Women were a major presence in his life, and his closest associates and most devoted followers were female. His contemporaries did not see him as a wholly masculine figure, though he claimed patriarchal authority in his roles as cultural critic or as the Master of the Guild of St George. In the decades immediately succeeding his death, his legacy often inspired women’s growing ambitions to play an active part in public life, for Ruskin had always insisted that they had a right and a responsibility to work – noting, for instance, of Millais’s painting of Tennyson’s *Mariana* (1851) that if he had painted ‘Mariana at work in an unmoated grange, instead of idle in a moated one, it had been more to the point – whether of art or of life’. But he defined women’s obligations in language that was offensive to later twentieth-century feminists, and this damaged his reputation. Recent interpretations of Ruskin’s continuing significance have explored the tensions within his gendered identity. This lecture will reflect on the evolution of these debates, arguing that Ruskin’s rich and challenging thought, with its piercing critique of unregulated capitalism and environmental destruction, continues to have much to offer both men and women.



“Mariana in the Moated Grange”  
by John Everett Millais (1851)

Pay a visit to the **Ruskin Art Club** website!

**[www.ruskinartclub.org](http://www.ruskinartclub.org)**.

There you will find information and articles on the history of the Ruskin Art Club, biographical information and reading recommendations on John Ruskin, and background articles and Board of Directors' bios. Our resources page provides links to other Ruskin-oriented organizations and collections, along with an expanded library of recommended videos (art exhibitions, Ruskin-themed videos, and lectures), and we've added a unique page devoted to Ruskin's music. Our new and enlarged YouTube channel is an ever-expanding archive of recent lectures as well as videos of annual "Ruskin" lectures and other noteworthy events we've hosted in the past. By the way, when you catch up on a lecture you've missed or browse the channel, **be sure to subscribe!**

We've made it easier than ever to become a **Member** of the Ruskin Art Club, to **renew your membership online**, or to **donate** to the club. You can also register to attend an event on the Calendar page.

**Please tell us what you think of the changes and feel free to suggest improvements or additional features you'd like to see.**

**Contact us at our email address:**

**[info@ruskinartclub.org](mailto:info@ruskinartclub.org)**.