

ART APPRECIATION GROUP – Report by Tony Seward

In May, Caroline Chapman, author of *John & Joséphine: The Creation of the Bowes Museum*, joined us for a conversation about her latest book, *A Place Apart: The Artist's Studio 1400-1900*. Using illustrations from the cornucopia of images in the book, she talked us through the development of the studio from its early days as a noisy, busy mediaeval craft workshop, through the growing professionalisation of artists so that they were no longer dependent on the church or rich patrons for space to work in, to the rise of individual stars like Lord Leighton to wealth and independence. Even so, many of the most successful – Picasso and Francis Bacon amongst them - retained a nostalgia for the austere garret conditions of their early careers, before they achieved fame and fortune.



Interior of a Studio 1845 by Octave Tassaert

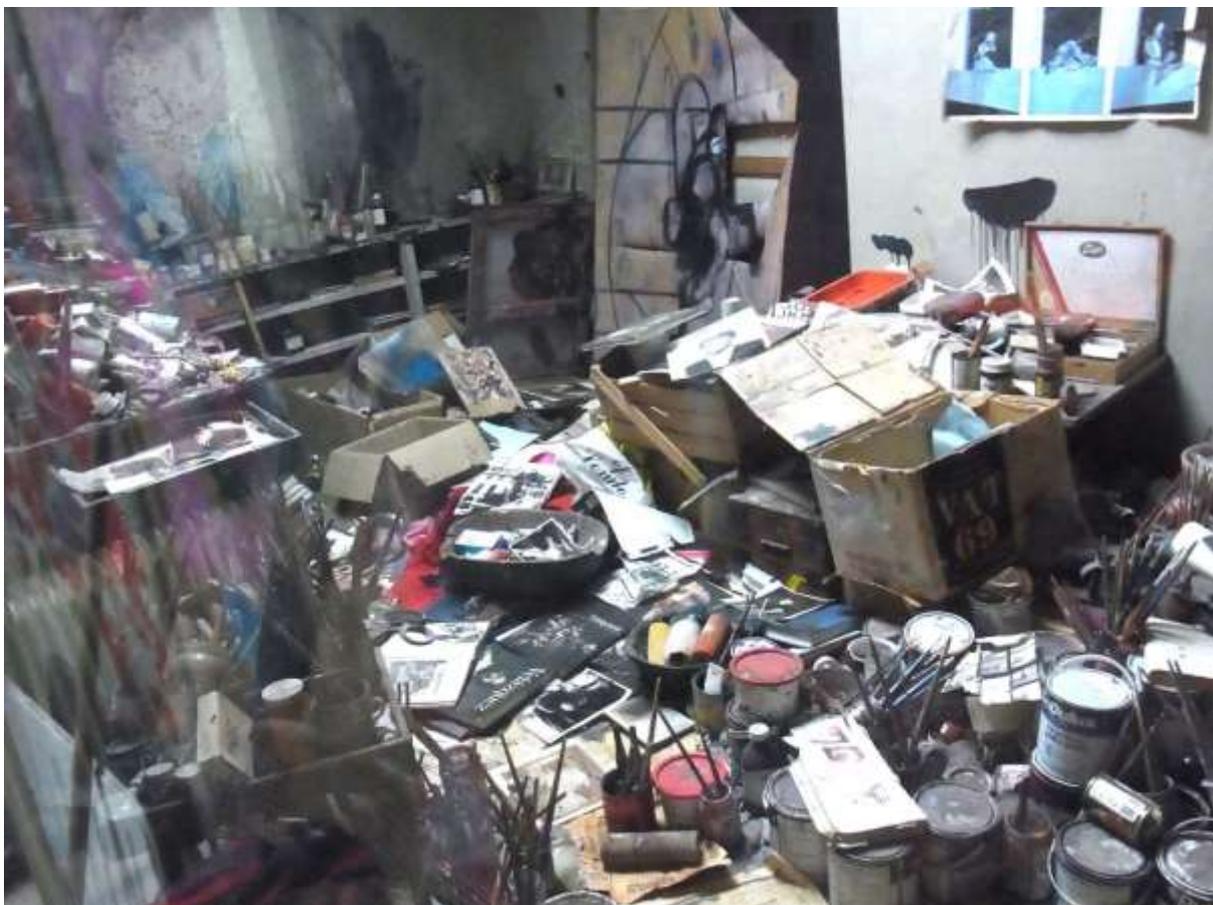
Depending on their individual temperaments, they preferred either to work in a well-ordered, comfortable space, or in chaos, surrounded by *bric-à-brac* and discarded objects – bus tickets, old newspapers, cigarette packets - which provided inspiration and indeed were sometimes incorporated in their works. But the chaos was often only in the eye of the beholder. The story is told of Degas, whose studio was filled with the accumulation of years, 'the visual rubble he knew by heart', so that when a tiny scrap of paper fell from a package, he pounced on it and threw it into the stove, saying, 'I don't like disorder'.



Picasso in his studio 1908

Caroline enlivened the discussion with many such amusing anecdotes, and contributions from the floor included reminiscences from Roger of his grandfather's experiences painting royalty, and from Peter on technical aspects, such as how to achieve certain colour effects.

To conclude, we looked at a talk by the Director of the Hugh Lane Gallery, who undertook the daunting project of moving Bacon's entire studio from London to Dublin, with every object, every scrap of paper, every bit of rubbish carefully recorded and exactly positioned in its new home. The result is a remarkable evocation of one artist's *modus operandi*, providing enough material to keep the art historians busy for years to come!



Francis Bacon's studio

Next up – On Wednesday 5 June, we will explore the life and work of Dame Laura Knight, and discuss the arrangements for our forthcoming visit to the Auckland Project on 3 July.