



IMAGE: JAN VAN EYCK, THE ARNOLFINI MARRIAGE, 1434. NATIONAL GALLERY/THE BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY

Lunch to a Fine Art

Harriet Compston delights in mixing Van Eyck with lemon sorbet

Art and food. Together stronger. A combination of two highly personal expressions of creativity, one which can be found at The Berkeley with London Art Studies. 'Learn. Art. Lunch' is the motto of founder Kate Gordon – and the experience is proving a great success (one pupil flew in from Boston). The one-day courses take place in the private dining room of Pierre Koffmann's restaurant and consists of three

lectures carefully timetabled around lunch. An enticing concept and as Kate, formerly of Sotheby's and CNN, says, 'a different way of learning about art.'

The courses explore the wide spectrum of art history. You can dally with Thomas Gainsborough in 'Great Tarts in Art: High Culture and the Oldest Profession' or look inwards during 'The Self as Subject: Introspection from Rembrandt to Emin'. There's also 'Stand by Your Man:

Partnerships in Art, Life and Love' or 'Lichtenstein and Pop Art'. I went classic and chose 'Van Eyck to Vermeer: Northern European Painting in Context'. I was, admittedly, not without my reservations – the title did sound rather academic – however my fears were unfounded.

The entire day sang of warmth. From Kate's friendly greeting amongst the buzz of breakfast meetings to the relaxed atmosphere of the ten-strong group, it was a world away from teenage History of Art lessons in dusty classrooms. Rebecca Lyons was our tutor for the day – 15 years at the National Gallery, 12 years at Christie's. We were in good hands. We were whisked back to 15th-century Bruges and beyond. From Van Eyck's depiction of the Arnolfini family to Memling's beautiful 'The Last Judgement', Van der Weyden's extraordinarily moving 'Deposition' and Patinir's bold 'Saint Jerome in the Wilderness', Rebecca delivered it as if we were pounding the streets ourselves.

Our minds full of colour, we paused for lunch. We had a choice of three entrées and three desserts. I chose the sea bass with crushed potatoes and the lemon tart with lemon sorbet. Both fantastic, generously portioned, with exquisite flavours. The meal is central to the occasion, not only, of course, for sustenance but as an excuse to thrash out thoughts and ideas. Petit fours savoured, we returned to learn about the earthier subjects of Vermeer and the meaning behind 'The Girl with the Pearl Earring'. 'He [Vermeer] saw things in a way others did not,' wrote author Tracy Chevalier. London Art Studies gave us the excuse to do just that.

From £175, 020 7259 5634; londonartstudies.com

Save the date

24th April: *The Legacy of Jackson Pollock*

9th May: *Picasso and Cubism: An Artistic Revolution*

14th May: *The Heart of Darkness: Colonialism, Capitalism and Art*

21st May: *Royal Jewels: from Tsars to Maharajahs*

11th June: *Contemporary Jewellery: 1960-2013*