

## **Gender and the Body: Kept Behind Curtains, the Story of the Nude**

The nude is still seen in our modern age, and indeed has been seen for quite some time as the pinnacle of creative artistic perfection, but throughout the course of art history the notion of the perfect body and consequently gender has been constantly reshaped and redefined.

This lecture will look at the continuing fascination with representation of the body in sculpture and in painting across the ages, with sculpture from the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, painting from the Renaissance, and through to the modern age with paintings from the Impressionists. This span of time will encompass iconic works within this lecture by Botticelli, Raphael, Titian, Bernini, Degas, Renoir and Velazquez, to name but a few.

Moreover this lecture will look at the reasons that lay behind the commissioning of such images. What were their purposes, who were the patrons behind these images, and what, if any, hidden riddles; signs and symbols are hidden within these seemingly enigmatic and flawless images of perfection.

As this lecture charts the ever changing attitude towards the nude as a subject we will look at the treatment of nudes by collectors and museums in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as we set the scene and chart the many and varied approaches to this subject that has become synonymous with the very idea of art itself; indeed finally asking ourselves, 'if this is art', how did it become so and why?

Short Reading list:

Clark, Kenneth, *The Nude: A Study of Ideal Art*, (John Murray, 1956)

Eire, Carlos .M. N, *War against the Idols: the Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge University Press, 1986)

Sutherland Harris, Ann, *17<sup>th</sup> Century Art & Architecture*, (Laurence King, 2008)