

A CALENDAR OF
TREASURES FROM
THE RUSKIN
COLLECTION
(with additional material)

OCTOBER

Guild of St George
With thanks to Museums Sheffield

*Text by Louise Pullen and Stuart Eagles
Images selected by Stuart Eagles
Images scanned by Museums Sheffield
Edited & designed by Stuart Eagles*

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Press Releases

Events (Sheffield)

Events (General)

--Past Events

Background

Early Years

The Guild Today

Ruskin Collection

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--RinS 2015

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The Ruskin Lecture

Whitelands Ruskin Lecture

Welcome to Ruskin's Guild of St George

John Ruskin (1819-1900) was a polymath. As a writer, he commanded international respect. He was an art critic and an art patron, a skilled draughtsman and talented watercolourist, and a fierce critic of prevailing social and political norms. He wrote about nature and architecture, craftsmanship, geology, botany, Greek myth, education—a dizzying variety of subjects. Driven by his deep faith in social justice, he established the Guild of St George in the 1870s to right some of the social wrongs of the day and make England a happier and more beautiful place in which to live and work.

RUSKIN AND POLITICS
CLICK TO WATCH

POLITICAL THEORY - John Ruskin

The founding aim of the Guild was to acquire land and—through labour, wind and water power—to bring it into useful production.

The Guild's activities today are mainly focused around the [Ruskin Collection](#) in [Sheffield](#) and its [woodlands and rural projects](#) in the [Wyre Forest](#). We also host [symposia](#) on issues of contemporary concern and [publish](#) a growing range of books and cards.

OCTOBER 1



On This Day in 1932, W. G. Collingwood died.

W. G. Collingwood, "The Head of Ilaria del Carretto", from the "Tomb Sculpture" by Jacopo della Quercia, Lucca Cathedral, Italy (1882).

Collingwood made this drawing whilst on tour with Ruskin, who attributed della Quercia's effigy as the source of his interest in Italian art. Over the years, Ruskin wrote several descriptions of the sculpture which show he found it a sensual mix of lifelike portrait and symbolic craftsmanship. After periods of mental illness, Ruskin also seemed to find comfort in Ilaria's effigy. In 1882, for example he wrote to a friend from Lucca: "I have my Ilaria here, and her Pug-dog and am rather happy." The sculpture had a similar effect on Collingwood. When he painted the effigy, he wrote home to his fiancée that she should be jealous: he had fallen in love with Ilaria. Ilaria del Carretto (1379-1403) was the second wife of Paulo Guingini, an aristocrat, trader, politician, patron of the arts and the Signore (Lord) of Lucca. After Ilaria's death during childbirth, Guingini ordered this sarcophagus for Lucca's cathedral, though he actually buried her in the family chapel.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

OCTOBER 2

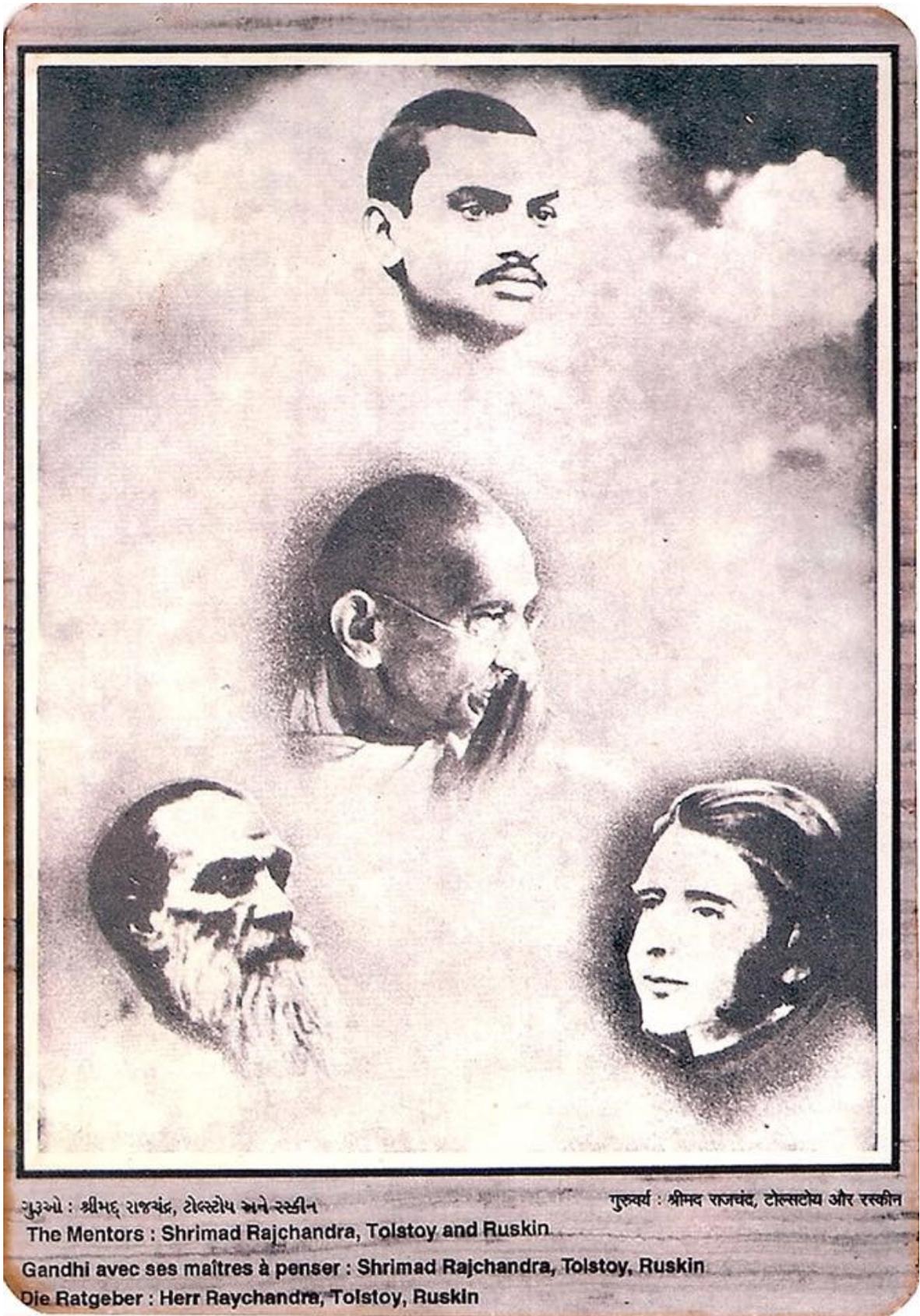
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<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



*The Head of ILARIA DEL CARRETTO - FROM THE TOMB BY DELLA QUERCIA
IN THE CATHEDRAL OF LUCCA.
By W.G. Collingwood.*



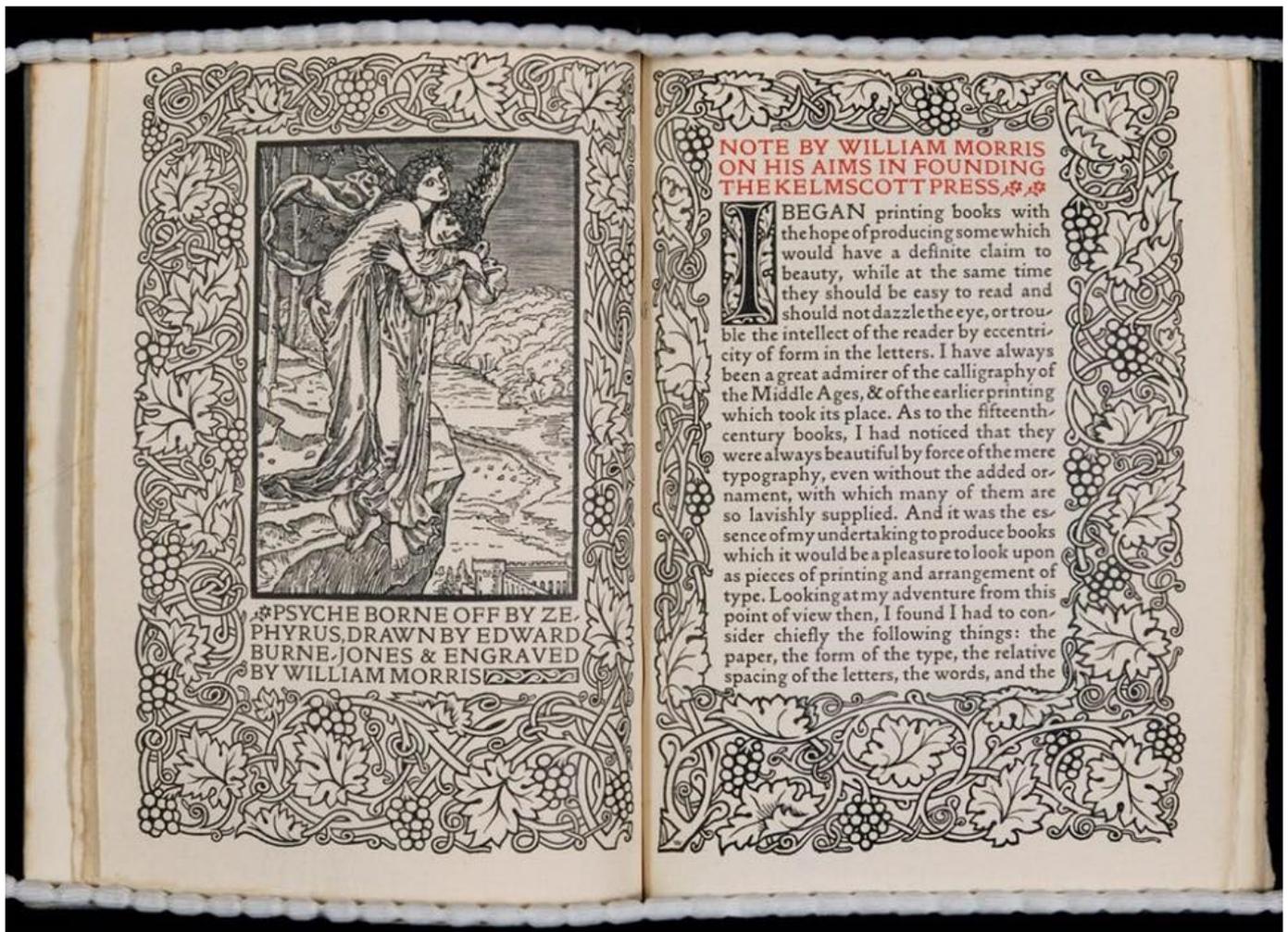
On This Day in 1869, M. K. Gandhi was born. Read Sarvodaya (સર્વોદય) [The Welfare of All] his Gujarati paraphrase of Ruskin's Unto this Last (retro-translated into English) uploaded to the Resources section of the Guild's website <http://www.gildofstgeorge.org.uk/.../.../GandhiUNTOTHISLAST.pdf>

OCTOBER 3

On This Day in 1896, William Morris died.

“A Note by William Morris on his Aims in Founding the Kelmscott Press, together with a Short Description of the Press by Sydney Cockerell, and an Annotated List of the Books Printed thereat” (1898) (with artwork by Byrne-Jones).

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



OCTOBER 4



Thomas Matthews Rooke, "Avallon from the Valley, France" (1886).

This image shows the agricultural terracing on one side of Avallon, in north-eastern France. St Lazare, the town's Romanesque church, can be seen on the skyline of this drawing. The other tower, in the upper left corner, is a circular defence/lookout tower, part of the ramparts or walls that still encircle the town. This view is still much the same today. Rooke made this drawing in response to a commission from John Ruskin: "At Avallon I want all you can do of any part of the porches which you can do without catching cold from the fearful wind, and one or two things in neighbouring villages such as you can sketch in an afternoon and be done with." Rooke's drawings from St Lazare's portal are in the Ruskin Library at Lancaster; however, there are several rapidly-worked landscape scenes from the surrounding villages in Sheffield's Ruskin Collection.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

OCTOBER 5

Thomas Bewick (1753-1828), "Study of a Little Bittern" (1803). This is an original drawing for an illustration in Bewick's book "Birds of Britain", Volume II, subtitled "A History and Description of Water Birds", published in 1804. Each bird appeared as a small vignette illustration in woodcut, but the book is famous also for its small illustrations of everyday life in the "tailpieces". Ruskin admired Bewick's woodcut illustrations: "The execution of the plumage in Bewick's birds is the most masterly thing ever yet done in woodcutting". He described Bewick as one of the rare artists who could represent "many features with few lines". Ruskin also respected Bewick for showing scenes of rural life and ignoring the whims of the nobility in his books (unlike most bird books of the time, which set out to charm the rich), because Bewick, a farmer's son, represented the life he knew. <http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



OCTOBER 6

"Mountain Scene", apparently after Turner, possibly by Joseph Arthur Severn, W. G. Collingwood or Ruskin himself.

This watercolour shows the high Alpine mountain range that borders France, Switzerland and Italy. Records in the Ruskin Collection suggest that it is a detail of a watercolour by JMW Turner. Unfortunately, there is no mention of which watercolour and despite thorough research, it has not been possible to identify a specific work. If this were a copy of a Turner work, it would most likely be a small detail from one of Turner's earlier or larger works; the trees and mountain outline in this piece do not follow the style of Turner's full-scale works, and his later style was very different from this copy.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



The 3rd Master of Ruskin's Guild of St George, George Thomson, Mayor of Huddersfield, died on this day in 1921 <http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/guild-masters/>



OCTOBER 7

Edward Donovan, "Studies of Invertebrate Animals, Volume IV" (1790-1810). Post 1 of 5. This is not a book as such, but a volume of collected watercolour illustrations that were bound together in the 1870s for the Ruskin Collection. It contains watercolour studies made towards several of Donovan's books on natural history. He produced a number of these, under titles such as "The Naturalist's Repository, or Miscellany of Exotic Natural History Exhibiting Rare and Beautiful Specimens of Foreign Birds, Insects, Shells, Quadrupeds, Fish and Marine Productions", which he published between 1822 and 1827. More famously, Donovan produced "The Natural History of British Shells", first published in 1799, which became one of the most popular books on shells during the 1800s, owing to its beautifully produced, hand-coloured illustrations. All of his books, however, were notable for their vivid and detailed studies. Not only did Donovan paint the preliminary illustrations for his books, he also made sure he had control over the final published illustrations themselves by etching, engraving and hand-colouring them himself.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



OCTOBER 8

On This Day in 1469, Filippo Lippi died.

Charles Fairfax Murray, "Nativity with St George and St Dominic" after Lippi (1876-80).

Lippi painted the original work in the 1460s for the dining hall of the San Domenico Monastery in Prato, a city near Florence. He has added two saints to the traditional nativity scene. St George on the left is recognisable by his attributes (or personal symbols): armour and banner. St Dominic, a monk, can be recognised by his habit and tonsure, and by the icon to his right, signifying his holy visions. Murray's study of Lippi's work is schematically, or rather vaguely painted. Painting according to Ruskin's wishes, he emphasised the colours of the painting, rather than individual details. Ruskin wasn't only interested in Lippi's use of colour, however. He described his art as "the finest, out and out, that ever monk did." He felt that Lippi's work was "the most perfect unison of religious myth with faithful realism yet produced".

Purchase this image in the form of a greetings card from from our shop. Browse the catalogue (card ref. Q2):

http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/uploads/2016/Guild_FullCatalogue.pdf



OCTOBER 9

Frank Randal, "Le Pont Valentré, Cahors, France" (1883).

This watercolour is an example of a "memorial study"--a view commissioned by John Ruskin to record medieval architecture that was under the threat of destruction or restoration. Restoration was, in Ruskin's eyes, much the same as destruction, as he felt that the original "spirit" of the craftsman could not be retained in or substituted by replacements. Ruskin frequently engaged Randal for this type of work. Randal had been in France for some time when he received a letter stating that "... If the railway from Limoges went south to Cahors there is or was a bridge there... You are not to draw the bridge... in colour, but only any bit of it you like." Randal made a number of studies of the bridge but conveniently ignored the instruction about colour. In fact, Randal and Ruskin were too late. The bridge, which dates from the 1300s, had already been restored in 1879.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



OCTOBER 10

Frank Randal, "Western Tower, Le Pont Valentré, Cahors, France" (1883).
<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



OCTOBER 11

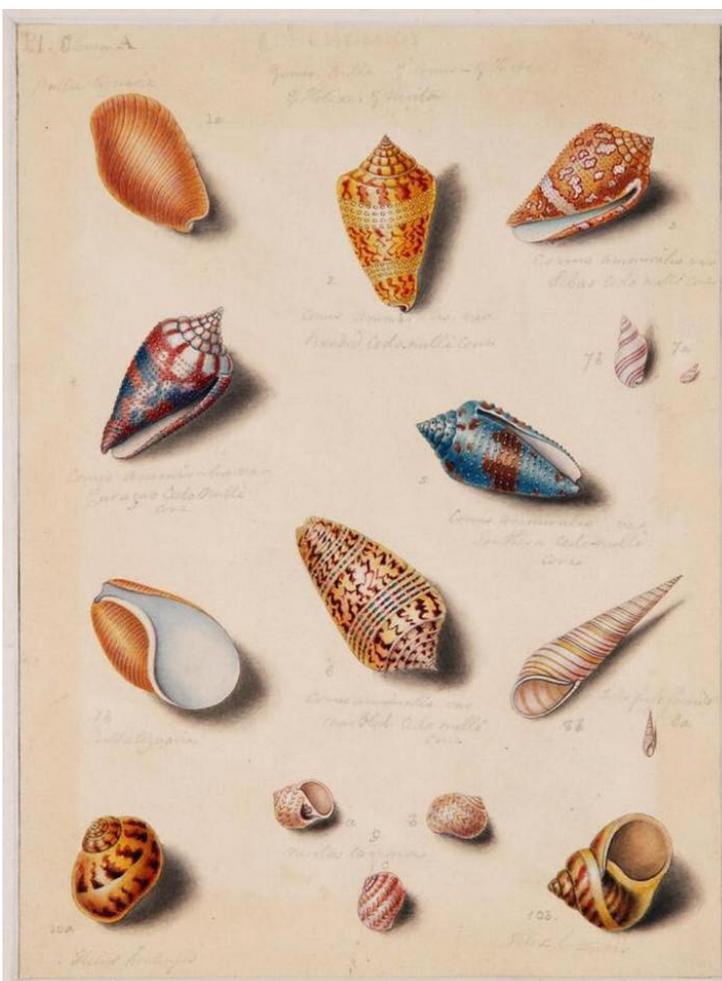
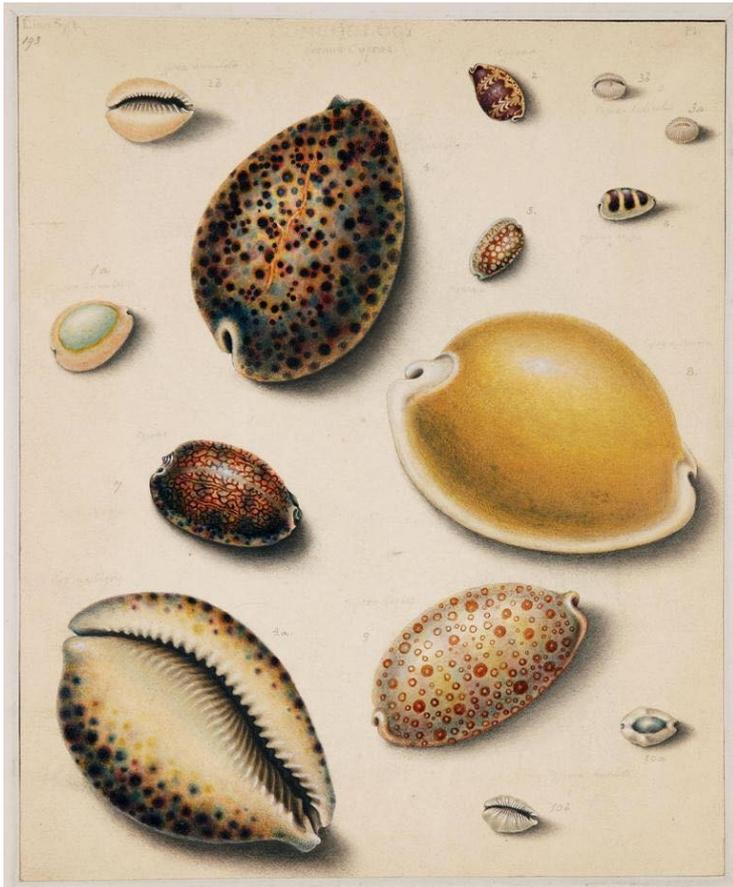
Henry Roderick Newman, "Facade of the Duomo, Lucca, Italy" (1885).

Ruskin greatly admired San Martino, writing that the inlaid carvings on the façade "struck [him] dumb with admiration and amazement." He commissioned this view of the façade from Newman, sending him a pencil sketch of the viewpoint he wanted him to work from. Unfortunately, though, Ruskin did not admire Newman's finished work, calling it an "unhappy drawing". Newman had painted it using only four basic paint colours, and Ruskin wrote on the pencil sketch that Newman "lost himself and me, alike, in his unhappy egotism of Ultramarine--Rose madder & Yellow ochre!" Nevertheless, Newman paid particular attention to the inlaid carvings that Ruskin so much admired. They date from the early 1200s and depict figures, animals, hunting scenes and flowers. This is a style known as "Lucchese Romanesque". At San Martino, it was carried out under one sculptor, Guido Bigarelli, also known as Guidetto.

<http://www.gildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



OCTOBER 12



Edward Donovan,
"Studies of Invertebrate
Animals, Volume
IV" (1790-1810). Post 2
of 5.

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engraving and hand-colouring them himself.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

OCTOBER 13



Frank Randal, "Pine Tree at Castione, above Lecco, Italy" (1885).

This work is part of a package of drawings that Randal sent John Ruskin from Lecco. Unfortunately, Ruskin didn't like this study and wrote: "The tree study is nearly all wasted time. Trees ought to be drawn always in pure outline." Ruskin's books of art lessons do tell students to draw trees in outline, so that the shapes and contours can be represented accurately. In "The Elements of Drawing" Ruskin wrote: "Choose any tree that you think pretty, which is nearly bare of leaves... You will see that all the boughs of the tree are dark against the sky. Consider them as so many dark rivers, to be laid down in a map with absolute accuracy;... It may perfectly well happen that in Nature [the tree's contours] should be less distinct than your outline will make it; but it is better in this kind of sketch to mark the facts clearly. The temptation is always to be slovenly and careless, and the outline is like a bridle, and forces our indolence into attention and precision."

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

OCTOBER 14

J. W. Bunney, "Lake and Mountain Range, Switzerland" (1864).

There is a very faint inscription on this work that reads "The Lake of Thun". This view appears to be from the town of Thun itself, which is situated on flatter terrain than the mountains. The view from the town's lakeside gardens was very popular with artists in the 1800s. The paper Bunney has used in this drawing is a coarse pale blue paper which JMW Turner popularised for use in watercolour painting. With a darker toned paper, it is possible to create brighter highlights with pale-coloured paint. The transparent colours in this work, including the lake edge and the green, are in watercolour paints. The stronger paint tones, such as the far end of the lake, and the clouds, are painted in bodycolour. Bodycolour is similar to watercolour paint, but produces denser colour on the paper.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



OCTOBER 15



F. T. Underhill, "Dartmouth on the River Dart, Devon" after Turner (c. 1891).
<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

OCTOBER 16



Chiesa Santa Maria della Spina, Pisa, Italy by an unidentified photographer.

Santa Maria of the Thorn was built in 1230 on the banks of the River Arno in Pisa. Ruskin was evidently fond of it, referring to the building as "my pet La Spina Chapel". In 1871, the authorities began to rebuild it in a higher position on the river. Whilst this was intended to protect the building from floods, it altered its shape and caused the destruction of some of its facings and ornaments. In 1872, for example, Ruskin described how a marble cross was "dashed to pieces" as he tried to draw it to make a lecture diagram. When buildings were being destroyed or altered so rapidly, Ruskin found photography the fastest way to record them. Nevertheless, he felt photographs were no substitute for making drawn records. He felt that photographs lacked the emotional attachment that an artist invested in their work, and lacked an artist's devotion to the subject.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



On this day in 1854, Oscar Wilde was born. He admired Ruskin & likened his "mighty and majestic prose" to Turner's sunsets <http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/>

OCTOBER 17

Edward Lear, "Phoenicopterus ruber" [American flamingo] (1833).
<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



OCTOBER 18

On This Day: Feast Day of St Luke.

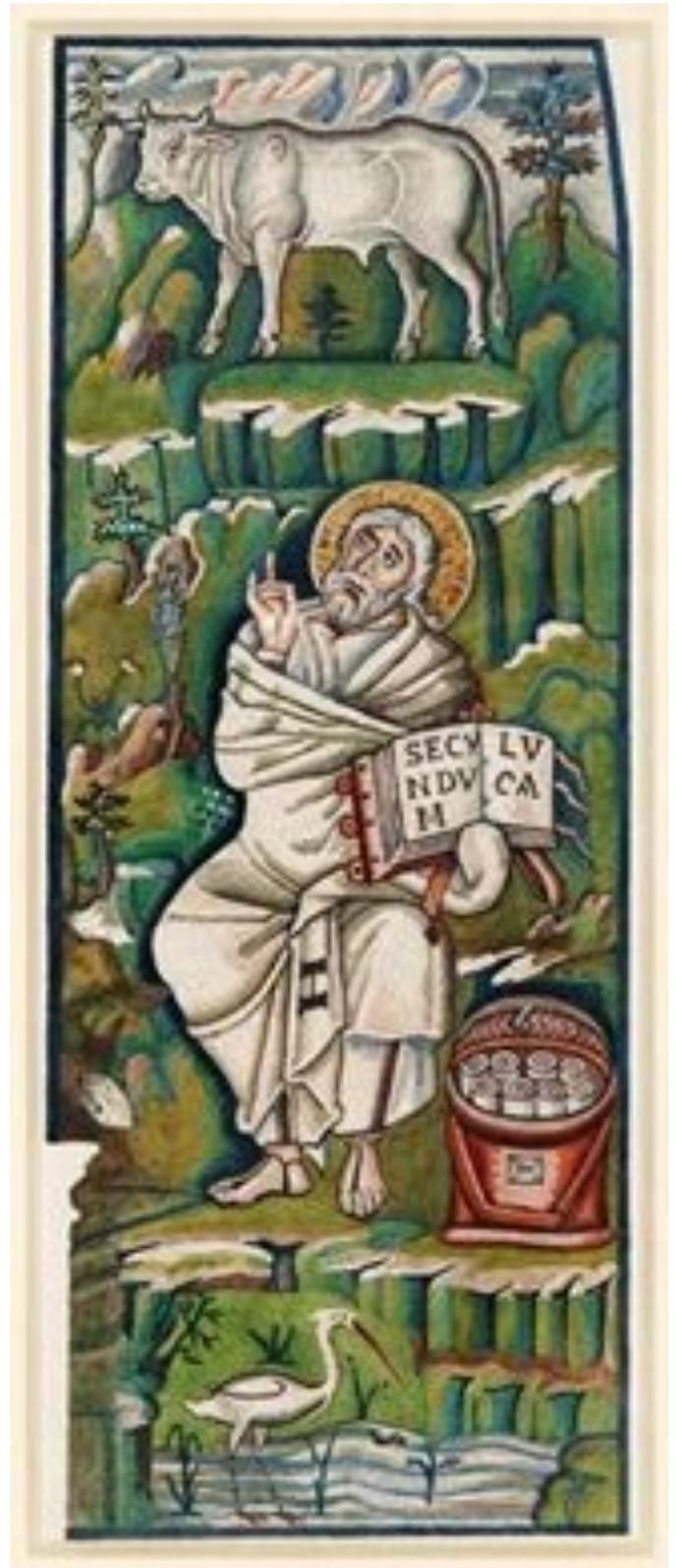
Frank Randal, "'St Luke', Study of Mosaic, North Side of Choir, San Vitale, Ravenna, Italy (1884).

This design comes from a 1500-year-old mosaic scheme which fills a large part of San Vitale.

Ruskin sent Randal to Ravenna to make records of the mosaics prior to any restoration that could change their appearance. He asked Randal to assist T.M. Rooke who was already in Ravenna. Rooke had previously painted many ancient mosaics in San Marco, Venice and was therefore able to teach Randal the appropriate techniques. Although the mosaics weren't actually in danger at this time, Ruskin felt that they deserved to be better known.

He planned to use the studies in a book called "Our Fathers Have Told Us", which was to comprise of "sketches of the history of Christendom." Though he never finished the book, Ruskin had planned for Ravenna to feature in the second chapter in a history of Theodoric, a 6th-century king who built churches in the city and whose portrait also features in San Vitale's mosaics.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



OCTOBER 19

Frank Randal, "Study from a cast of a twig of whortleberry" (1882).

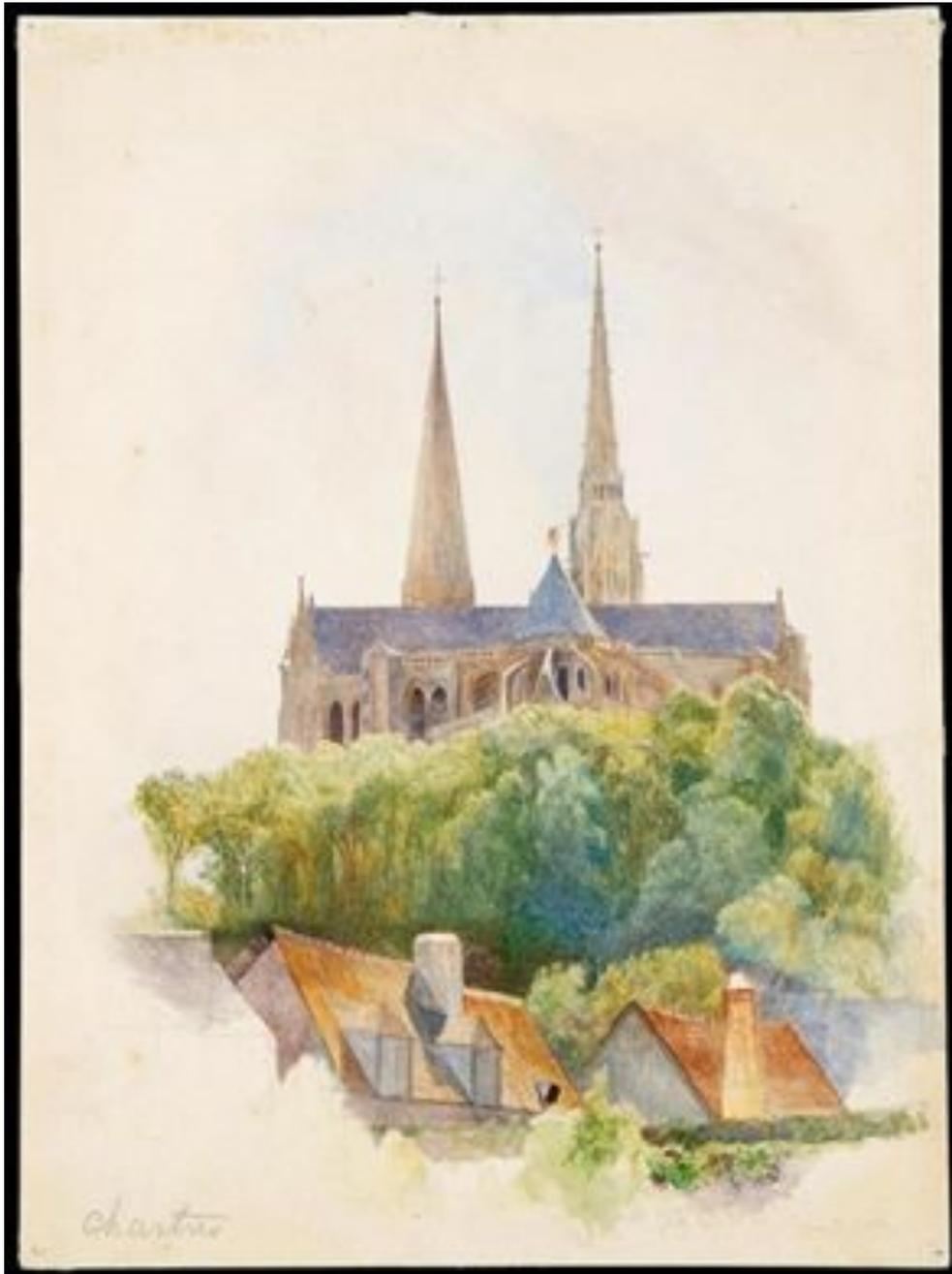
According to William White, the first Curator of the Ruskin Museum at Meersbrook Park, "This affords a good illustration of the direct application of foliage to sculpture; this sketch -in opaque white, with grey shade, on grey paper,-- being made from a plaster cast of the leaf spray itself."

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



OCTOBER 20

"Chartres Cathedral from the North, France" (1870) by an unidentified artist.
<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



OCTOBER 21

On This Day: Feast Day of St Ursula. John Ruskin, "The Dream of St Ursula" after Carpaccio (c. 1877).

Ruskin copied this work from a cycle of nine paintings by the artist, Vittore Carpaccio. It tells the story of St Ursula. Carpaccio produced these paintings for the Confraternity of St Ursula in Venice. Today, they are displayed in the Accademia Gallery. This work is a hand-coloured photograph by David Gould (1846-1916) of Ruskin's watercolour copy of "The Dream of St Ursula", the fifth painting in the cycle. Ruskin's copy is in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Ruskin found Carpaccio's painting very moving, and the Accademia Gallery took the huge painting off display for him, so that he could copy it in private. He wrote to his cousin, "There she lies, so real, that when the room's quite quiet, I get afraid of waking her!" Carpaccio used for inspiration the "Legenda Aurea" or "Lives of the Saints", published in Venice in 1475. The Legenda told that St Ursula, a Christian princess, lived in the 3rd or 4th century AD. She agreed to marry a pagan prince on the condition that he first accompanied her and 11,000 virgins on a pilgrimage across Europe to Rome. In Rome, Pope Cyriacus joined Ursula's pilgrimage. On her return home, she had a vision of an angel who foretold her martyrdom. The prophecy was realised when Ursula and her attendants reached Cologne in Germany. Here, Ursula and all the pilgrims were attacked and murdered by the Huns, who had invaded from Asia and eastern Europe. This scene shows St Ursula's vision of her death, and the angel entering her bedroom holds a palm branch, a symbol of Christian martyrdom. Ruskin first took note of the St Ursula paintings because he admired the work of the artist Carpaccio. He admired Carpaccio's use of colour and attention to detail. Furthermore, although Carpaccio painted historical scenes, the figures, architecture and backgrounds would have been familiar to his Venetian audience. Here, for example, the furniture and furnishings in St Ursula's room are historically accurate. Ruskin saw St Ursula as a symbol of female purity and



beauty, and discussed her story in relation to Christian theology. In his later years, especially at times of mental illnesses, Ruskin came to link the paintings and the life of St Ursula with Rose La Touche, the love of his life. Rose died prematurely, possibly of anorexia, and Ruskin found both comfort and grief in the images of Ursula, and looked at them for spiritual messages from Rose herself. Ruskin found this painting particularly poignant, as it reminded him of his visit to Rose on her deathbed.

<http://>

Angelo Alessandri, "The Head of St Ursula" detail from "The Dream of St Ursula" after Carpaccio (1892)
<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk>



Charles Fairfax Murray, "St Ursula and Two Maids of Honour the Moment before Martyrdom" after Carpaccio (1877).

This study is from the eighth panel, in which St Ursula kneels to the left of the painting, submitting to archers who are about to shoot her and her companions. Her funeral procession is at the right of the painting and is not seen here. Ruskin, who commissioned this copy from Murray, said that it was "the best of all that my friend [Murray] did with me at Venice, for St George, and with St George's help and St Ursula's." Murray made two records of this detail for the Collection. The other, also shown here, is obviously less finished.



S^t. Ursula and her two Maids of Honour.
The moment before their Martyrdom.

WALK, CARPACIO, WALKER, 1892.

Charles F. Murray, Walker, 1892.

VIT... CAR...
VEN... AN...
MCCCCXXX
XIII

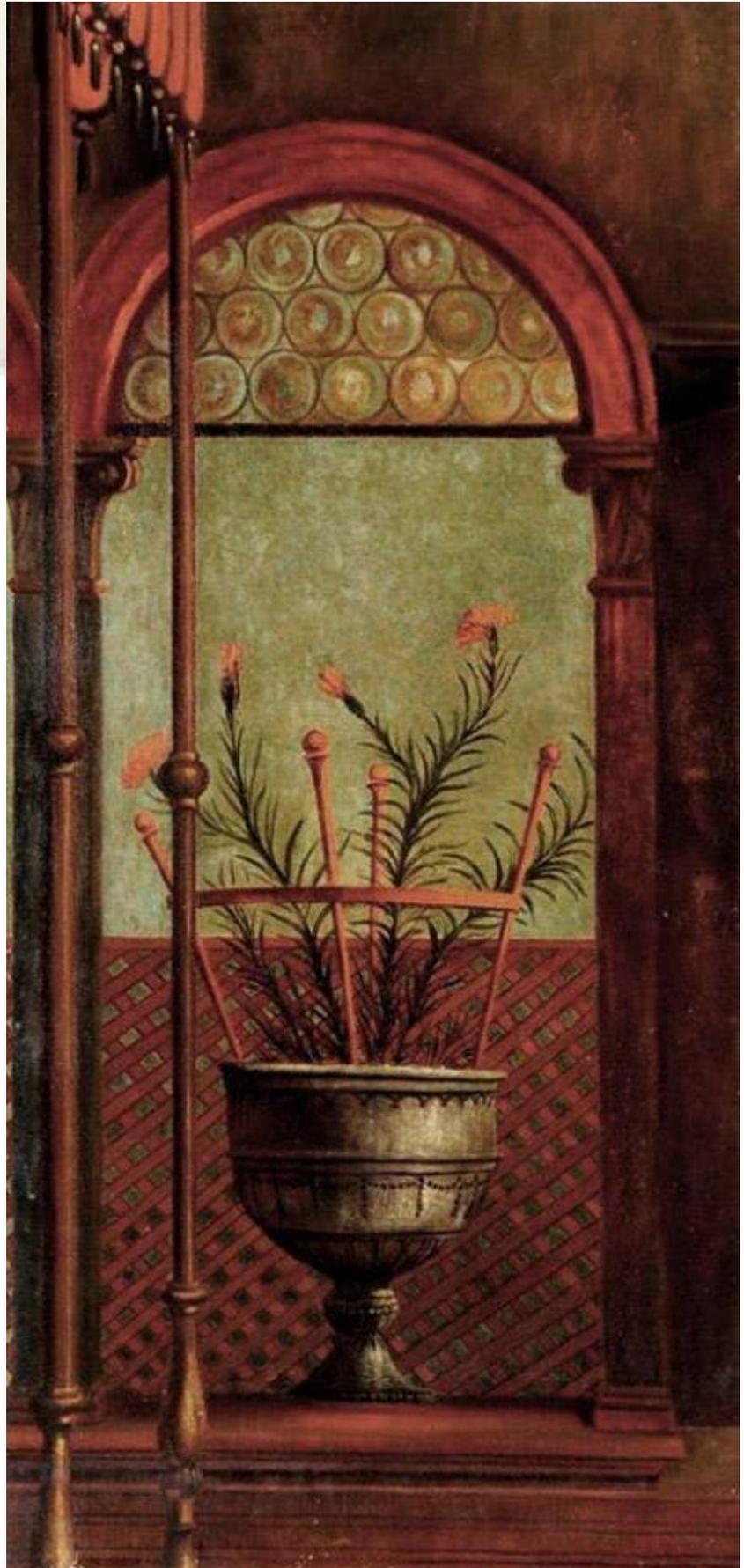


Charles Fairfax Murray, "The King's Consent" after Carpaccio (1876).

This detail is from the third section of the series. In the original painting, St Ursula's nurse is present below this room scene. Another artist, Angelo Alessandri, painted this section towards the series of St Ursula copies in the Ruskin Collection.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

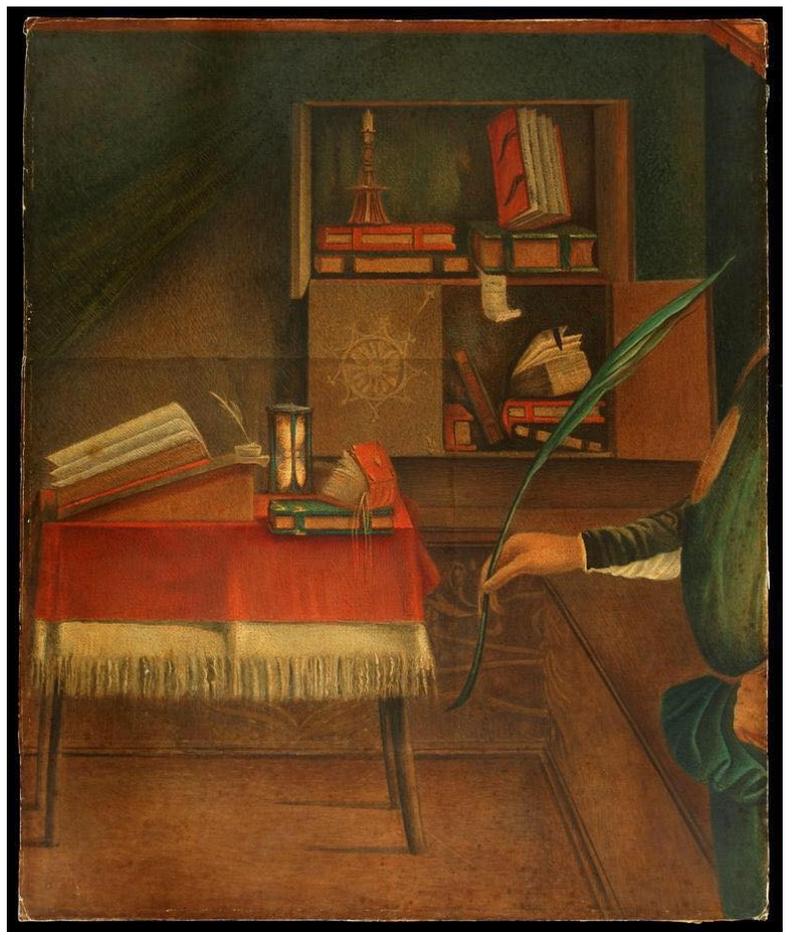
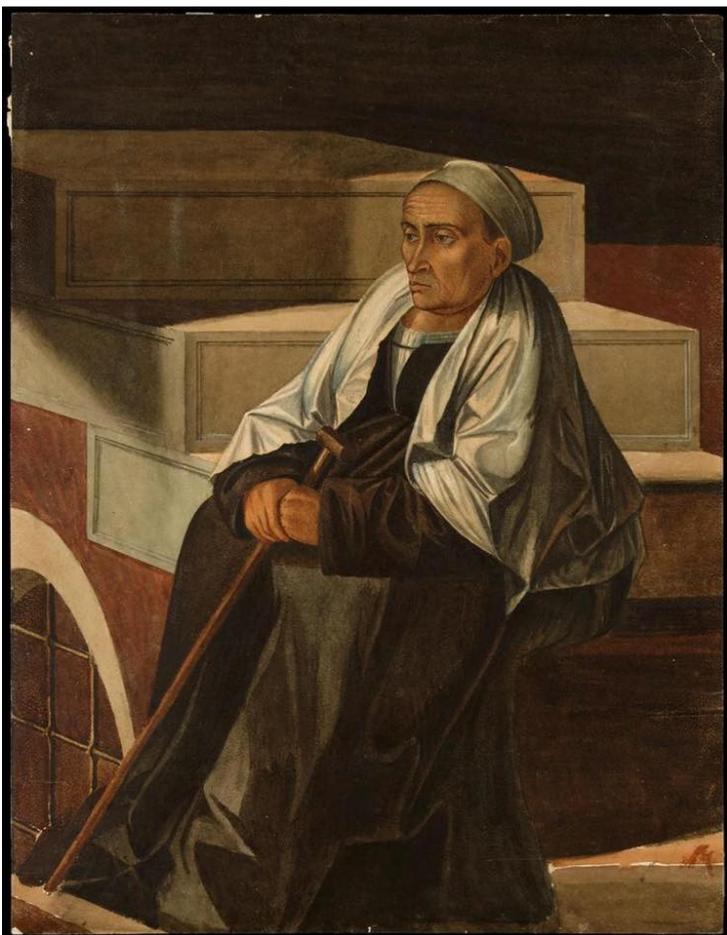
John Wharlton Bunneey, Detail of the Window from "The Vision of St Ursula", after Carpaccio (1876-77).



Charles Fairfax Murray, "St Ursula receiving the Prince" after Carpaccio (1877).

Angelo Alessandri or Raffaele Carloforti, "St Ursula's Nurse", after Carpaccio (1879).

John Wharton Bunnay, Corner Detail from "The Vision of St Ursula", after Carpaccio (1876-77).

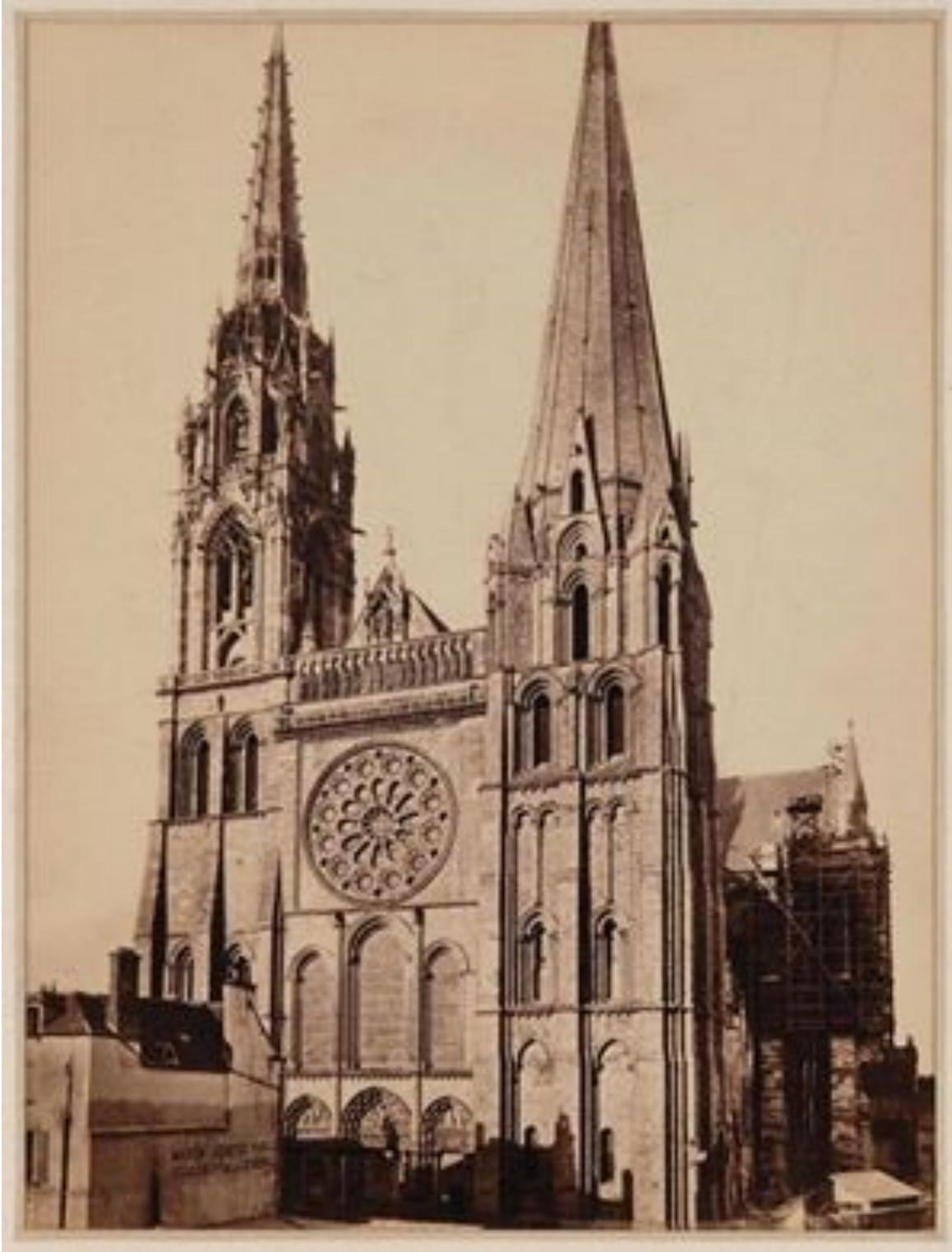


Charles Fairfax Murray, "St Ursula receiving the Pope's Benediction" after Carpaccio (1877). This detail is from the sixth painting in the series. In the sixth painting, the kneeling figure of St Ursula is at the centre, next to her fiancé, an English prince. A long procession of women is to her left and a procession of bishops to the centre and right. A large castle is in the background. The work describes a scene in Rome where Ursula met the Pope.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



OCTOBER 22



A late 19th-century photograph of the Western Façade of Chartres Cathedral by an unidentified photographer.

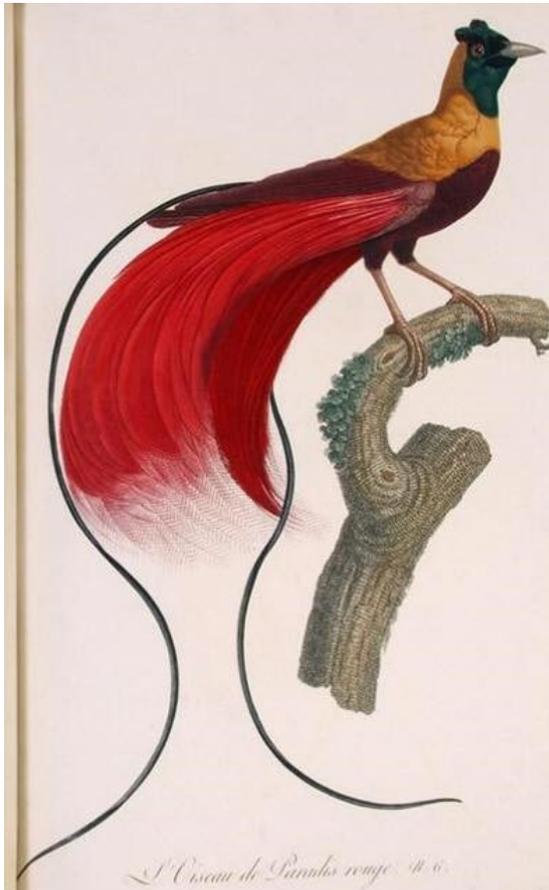
<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

OCTOBER 23

François Lavaillant (1753-1824), *Histoire Naturelle des Oiseaux de Paradis, et des Rolliers, suivie de celle des Toucans, et des Barbus* (1806) Volume 1.

Post 1 of 5.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



OCTOBER 24

On This Day in 1839, W. H. Gill was born.

W. H. Gill, "From Bud to Fruit: The Life History of a Cherry, 'Buds'" (1881).

This study is the first of a series of ten showing the development over 74 days of a sprig of a cherry tree. Gill was responding to a lecture by John Ruskin in which he said: "What we especially need to know of plants for educational purposes, is, not their anatomy, but their biography... We want them drawn from their youth to their age, from bud to fruit." Later, in his botany book "Proserpina", Ruskin looked at the development of the cherry plant in reverse order, concluding that the function of the fruit is to make the flowers: "You are fond of cherries perhaps, and think that the use of the cherry-blossom is to produce cherries. Not at all: the use of cherries is to produce cherry-blossom, just as the use of bulbs is to produce hyacinths, - not of hyacinths to produce bulbs." Ruskin concluded that the flower is more important than the fruit because plants don't only multiply through fruit seeds, but also by means of bulbs and roots.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



OCTOBER 25



On This Day in 1880, the naturalist Thomas Campbell Eyton died. Ruskin purchased the Eyton Collection for St George's Museum, Walkley.

Zosterops strenuus [Robust white-eye] after John Gould (1869).

This is a plate from "Birds of Australia", a seven-volume book published between 1837 and 1848, with further parts published up to 1869. It contained almost 800 plates, depicting every species of bird known in Australia at that time, and it cost subscribers £115, a vast sum at the time. Subscribers received each plate separately and could only have their plates bound into books after they had received the index and introduction with the last of the plates. Gould wrote the text and helped produce most of the initial illustrations, whilst his wife Elizabeth, and for the most part Henry Richter, carried out the lithography for the finished plates. While Gould was in Australia, he discovered the budgerigar and later introduced it as a pet to Britain. This bird's common name is "Robust White-eye". Known to live only on Lord Howe Island, to the east of Australia, it has been extinct since at least 1923.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

Naturalist Thomas Campbell Eyton died on this day in 1880. His collection is one of the gems of RUSKIN @MuseumSheffield <http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



OCTOBER 26

Edward Donovan, "Studies of Invertebrate Animals, Volume IV" (1790-1810).

This is not a book as such, but a volume of collected watercolour illustrations that were bound together in the 1870s for the Ruskin Collection. It contains watercolour studies made towards several of Donovan's books on natural history. He produced a number of these, under titles such as "The Naturalist's Repository, or Miscellany of Exotic Natural History Exhibiting Rare and Beautiful Specimens of Foreign Birds, Insects, Shells, Quadrupeds, Fish and Marine Productions", which he published between 1822 and 1827. More famously, Donovan produced "The Natural History of British Shells", first published in 1799, which became one of the most popular books on shells during the 1800s, owing to its beautifully produced, hand-coloured illustrations. All of his books, however, were notable for their vivid and detailed studies. Not only did Donovan paint the preliminary illustrations for his books, he also made sure he had control over the final published illustrations themselves by etching, engraving and hand-colouring them himself.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>





OCTOBER 27

Thomas Matthews Rooke, "Distant View of Avallon, France" (1886).

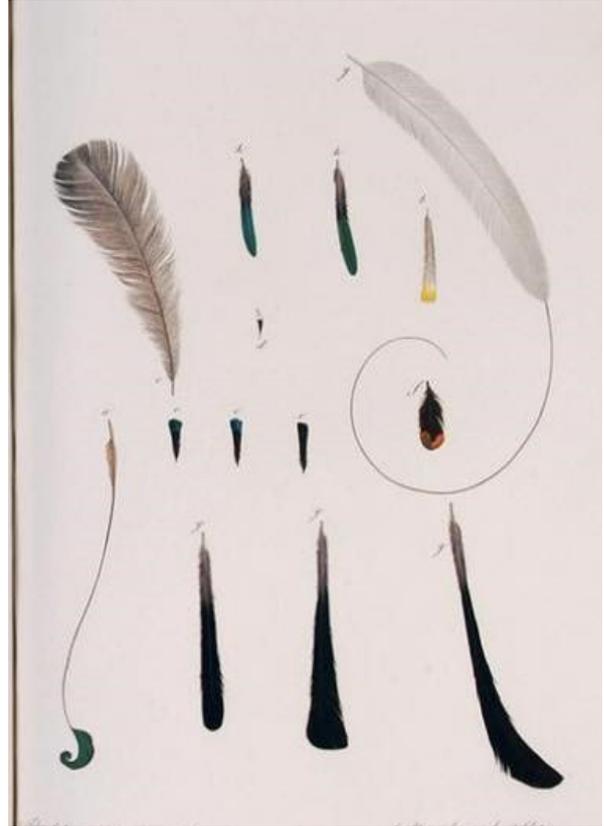
Rooke made this quick drawing in response to a commission from Ruskin, who asked him to draw Avallon's church porches and "one or two things in neighbouring villages such as you can sketch in an afternoon and be done with." Here Rooke has painted cottages on the main approach road to Avallon, in north-eastern France. The town itself is perched on the hill to the right, and the surrounding valley, which Ruskin called "the sweetest ever made by heaven" is clearly visible in the background. This work is more schematic than most of Rooke's drawings in Sheffield's Ruskin Collection. He has used a limited colour palette, with light and shadowed areas created using different strengths of the same colour. Possibly this relates to a comment in one of Ruskin's lectures: "usually, light and shade are thought of as separate from colour; but the fact is that all nature is seen as a mosaic composed of gradated portions of [colour]".

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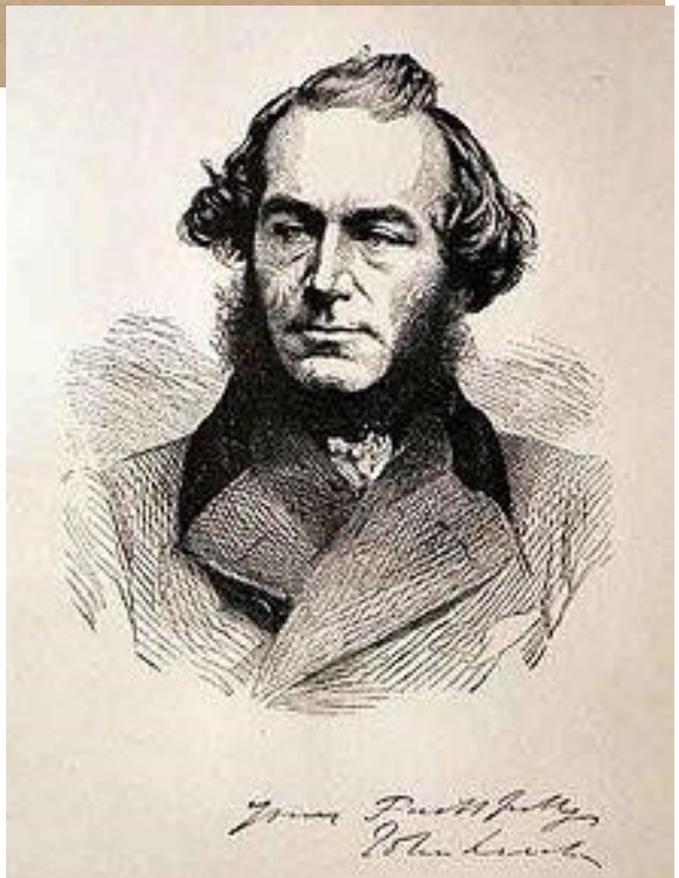


OCTOBER 28

François Lavaillant (1753-1824), *Histoire Naturelle des Oiseaux de Paradis, et des Rolliers, suivie de celle des Toucans, et des Barbus* (1806) Volume 1.
Post 2 of 5.



OCTOBER 29



On This Day: John Leech died 1864.
John Leech, "Mr Briggs is Weighed of Course" (1851).
<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

OCTOBER 30



John Ruskin, "Coastal Scene with a Fortress, Naples, Italy" (1841).

Ruskin made this drawing when his artistic tastes were still developing. According to his own notes, until 1842, the year after he made this study, his drawings generally imitated either his drawing masters, or the artists his father admired. He described his inspirations much later in 1883: "These sketches, though full of weaknesses and vulgarities, have also much good in them... all of them are of historical interest in their accuracy of representation. Sketching only in this way from nature, I was trying to make water-colour drawings and vignettes in imitation of Turner; which were extremely absurd and weak." Ruskin visited Naples during a ten-month tour of Italy that he made with his parents. In this view, the arched ruins are probably part of the thermal bath complex of Baiae. The fortress in the background of the watercolour is the Castello Aragonese di Baia, which was built in medieval times.

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OCTOBER 31

Thomas Matthews Rooke, "Laon, France, with the Cathedral from the North-East" (1886). In 1886, Ruskin sent Rooke to paint at Laon, writing: "I am going to avail myself of your divine sympathy with the French character and your exquisite architectural drawing. I want you to go first to Laon and see how you like it... The mouldings at Laon are the finest in the world, and for the town --you'll see." Although descriptions of Laon rarely featured in Ruskin's books, he wrote of the town and its location with affection in his letters and diary notes. Ruskin had admired the town's architecture and its setting when he spent time there several years earlier. His secretary, W.G. Collingwood, reported that Ruskin had spent mornings in Laon drawing architectural details and, during the afternoon, had rambled in the "hay fields and pear-orchards [which] gave him, it seems, as much pleasure as Chamouni[x] (the dramatic Alpine village on the border of France and Switzerland). Rooke painted a number of views of Laon for the Ruskin Collection, including views of the cathedral tower from different angles, the town's picturesque streets and scenes of the townspeople at market or in religious festivals.

Laon is an ancient French town situated in Picardy, a hilly area north of Paris. The old town is built on a hillside and, as can be seen from this work, was originally surrounded by fields. Today, the town has expanded to swallow up these fields and much of the surrounding area. The town's hilly position meant that it was able to defend itself. It was of major strategic importance between Roman times and the 1300s. As such, the town contains many early medieval buildings that were of interest to Ruskin, including its cathedral of the 1100s and 1200s, which was severely damaged in an explosion in 1870.

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