

Working Towards a  
Sustainable World:  
*inspired by Ruskin*

**Saturday 25th June 2016**  
70 Oxford Street, Manchester



Manchester  
Metropolitan  
University

# Introduction

This full-day roundtable features speakers who are making a difference. They will share their stories of working to make a better, more sustainable society, with the Victorian thinker John Ruskin as a source of inspiration.

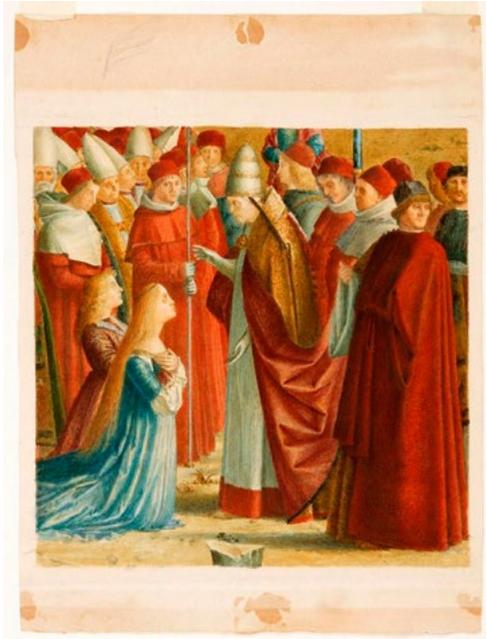
Ruskin looked to the medieval past to find models for a better future. He had a real impact on British – and global – culture in the 19th and early 20th Centuries. He inspired the Arts and Crafts pioneers Morris & Co and the establishment of the National Trust; the early Labour Party named him a major influence; Gandhi changed his life after reading *Unto This Last*. He was an early proponent of environmental awareness and ethical consumerism.

The speakers represent six subject areas taught at Manchester Metropolitan University:

- ✧ **Health, Psychology & Social Care:** *Julie McCarthy*, Cultural Producer at 42nd Street, a local young people's mental health charity.
- ✧ **Education:** *Aonghus Gordon*, founder of Ruskin Mill Trust, offering personalised programmes to people with complex learning and behavioral difficulties & *Ronan Brindley*, Head of Learning and Engagement at Manchester Art Gallery.
- ✧ **Art & Design:** *Olivier Geoffroy*, founder of Unto This Last, a furniture workshop in London fusing digitally-controlled cutting tools with Ruskinian craftsmanship & *Robin Sukatorn*, winner of the John Ruskin Prize (student category 2015) and a MFA student at the Manchester School of Art.
- ✧ **Food, Tourism & Events:** *John Iles* and *Jenny Robbins*, Directors of the Wyre Community Land Trust; John won a Future Farming award for 'putting the farm back at the heart of the community'.
- ✧ **Business:** *Catherine Howarth*, Chief Executive of ShareAction, the movement for responsible investment, was recognised by the World Economic Forum as a Young Global Leader in 2014.
- ✧ **Sustainability:** *Caroline Ikin* & *Dominika Wielgopolan* have both been awarded PhD studentships from Manchester Metropolitan University to do doctoral work on Ruskin in relation to landscape & gardening and gardening & communities.

Convened by *Dr Rachel Dickinson* (Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, Cheshire Faculty, Manchester Metropolitan University)

Co-sponsored by the Guild of St George, the charity for arts, crafts and the rural economy founded by Ruskin in the 1870s.



# Programme

<b>10.00</b>	<b>Arrival with tea &amp; coffee</b>
<b>10.30</b>	<b>Welcome</b> from Clive Wilmer (Master of the Guild of St George)
<b>10.40</b>	<p><b>Introduction to Ruskin and Sustainability</b></p> <p><b>Rachel Dickinson</b> (Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, Manchester Metropolitan University)</p> <p>Rachel will set the scene by introducing Ruskin and sustainability. She will also outline the day, which will culminate in a discussion involving everyone present.</p>
<b>11.00</b>	<p><b>Sustainable Investment</b></p> <p><b>Catherine Howarth</b> (ShareAction)</p> <p>Catherine will speak about how Ruskin's ideas on political economy and personal responsibility in business are relevant in the 21st Century, and how they have influenced the work of ShareAction.</p>
<b>11.30</b>	<b>Comfort break</b>
<b>11.40</b>	<p><b>New Approaches</b></p> <p><b>Robin Sukatorn</b> (Winner John Ruskin Prize [Student] 2015 and student at Man Met's Manchester School of Art)</p> <p>Robin will be presenting a selection of his drawings recording scenes from contemporary society in the North, including his illustration Jeremy Corbin speaks in Manchester which this year won in the Student category for the John Ruskin prize, as well as discussing the links between his practice and the ideas of Ruskin.</p> <p><b>Dominika Wielgopolan</b> (starting a PhD on Ruskin at Man Met's Cheshire Faculty)</p> <p>Dominika will speak about her PhD on Ruskin's environmental thought and its implementation, as well as its possible relevance today and future application. Interested in Ruskin's writings on nature and sustainability, she aims to adapt Ruskin's ecological solutions for the needs of small communities, both rural and urban.</p> <p><b>Caroline Ikin</b> (starting a PhD on Ruskin at Man Met's Cheshire Faculty)</p> <p>By studying Ruskin's approach to the designed landscape, Caroline intends to explore Ruskin's contribution to garden theory: was his garden-making a continuation of the Picturesque ideals of the eighteenth century, or was he responding to the Victorian desire to assert man's dominance over nature? Was his approach that of an artist, naturalist, agriculturalist, environmentalist, taste-maker or gardener?</p>

<b>12.30</b>	<b>Lunch</b> (sandwiches etc. provided on site)
<b>13.20</b>	<p><b>Youth &amp; Localism</b></p> <p><b>Julie McCarthy</b> (42<sup>nd</sup> Street) and <b>Ronan Brindley</b> (Manchester Art Gallery)</p> <p>Julie and Ronan will talk about Ruskin as a source of inspiration in Manchester as they speak from their experiences working for 42<sup>nd</sup> Street (a mental health charity housed in the Ancoats Art Museum established by Thomas Horsfall, who was inspired by Ruskin) and the Manchester Art Gallery.</p> <p><b>Aonghus Gordon</b> (Ruskin Mill Trust)</p> <p>Aonghus will talk about how he has applied Ruskin's social aesthetic in the Ruskin Mill Trust.</p>
<b>14.20</b>	<b>Comfort break</b>
<b>14.30</b>	<p><b>Business &amp; Community</b></p> <p><b>Olivier Geoffroy</b> (Unto This Last)</p> <p>Olivier will discuss his Ruskinian contemporary furniture business, speaking from his perspective as designer, craftsman and business owner.</p> <p><b>John Iles</b> and <b>Jenny Robbins</b> (Ruskin Land and Wyre Community Land Trust)</p> <p>John and Jenny will draw on experiences over the last decade at Uncllys Farm in the heart of the Wyre Forest on Ruskin Land. John will focus on how he has sought to weave some of the threads of Ruskin's thinking together in a rural setting. Adopting Ruskin's stated aim of 'making some small piece of English ground beautiful, peaceful and fruitful', he will show how with many partners – notably including Jenny – positive change has been brought about over the years.</p>
<b>15.30</b>	<b>Comfort break</b>
<b>15.40</b>	<b>Weaving Common Threads</b>
<b>16.00</b>	<b>Closing Drinks</b>

# Biographies

## Clive Wilmer

Clive Wilmer is the Master of the Guild of St George, the charity for arts, crafts and the rural economy established by Ruskin in the 1870s. A Fellow at Sidney Sussex College, University of Cambridge, he is the author of seven books of poetry, has edited Penguin selections of John Ruskin and William Morris, and has lectured extensively on Ruskin, Morris and Ezra Pound.

## Rachel Dickinson

Rachel Dickinson is a Principal Lecturer (Research & Knowledge Exchange; English) in the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies at Manchester Metropolitan University's Cheshire Faculty. Much of her research is on John Ruskin. Inspired by her academic study of him, she embraced craftsmanship and sustainability by learning to spin yarn, and buys ethically made products whenever possible. She is a Director of the Guild of St George.

## Catherine Howarth

Catherine Howarth is Chief Executive of ShareAction, where she has been since 2008. ShareAction is a registered charity promoting responsible investment, transparency and good governance by institutional investors. The organisation helps to give pension savers influence over how their savings are invested, and undertakes shareholder activism to achieve socially and environmentally sustainable business practice. Catherine is a trustee of the Scott Trust, owner of The Guardian, where she serves on the Investment Committee, and is a board member of Green Alliance, the UK's leading environmental think-tank.

## Robin Sukatorn

Robin Sukatorn is a figurative artist and illustrator, currently studying for an MFA in Illustration at the Manchester School of Art. He is working on producing a visual record of scenes, events and people from the cultural, political and community life of the North of England, through traditional drawing, painting printmaking and digital media.

## Dominika Wielgopolan

Dominika Wielgopolan is a Polish exchange student at Manchester Met, where she is about to start a Faculty-funded PhD 'Ruskinian utopias: localism and sustainable futures.' She has an MA in Political Science and is in the final stages of her second MA, in English Literature and Culture. Most of her free time is devoted to running the Sustainability and Growth Society at Manchester Met's Cheshire Faculty.

## Caroline Ikin

Caroline Ikin has been awarded a VC Scholarship to embark on a PhD at Manchester Met, exploring Ruskin's approach to the designed landscape. She currently works for the Gardens Trust, and also lectures and writes on nineteenth century gardens. She studied English and History of Art as an undergraduate, followed by a postgraduate diploma in Heritage Studies and a MA in Garden History.

## Julie McCarthy

Julie McCarthy is a Creative Producer who has worked across the UK and internationally and who specialises in arts and mental health. She is currently based at 42nd Street; a mental health charity working with 3000 young people (aged 13-25) each year. In September 2016 she will lead on the launch of The Horsfall; a dedicated creative space and programme for young people's mental health and inspired by the history of the Ancoats Art Museum.

## Ronan Brindley

Ronan Brindley is Head of Learning and Engagement at Manchester Art Gallery. He leads the gallery's popular public engagement programme that attracts over half a million visitors per year, with 60,000 of these involved in learning programmes. He has worked at a senior level in museums and galleries in the North West of England since the 1990s.

## Aonghus Gordon

Aonghus Gordon is the founder of the Ruskin Mill Trust, a diverse charitable organisation which operates a national network of quality services including education, care, training, advice and homes for people with complex learning and behavioural difficulties, from 7 years old to mature adults. Aonghus is inspired by the lives and work of John Ruskin, Rudolf Steiner, and William Morris. These bring together the joy of learning and making for the intention of service. This has informed the unique method of Ruskin Mill Trust's Practical Skills Therapeutic Education.

## Olivier Geoffroy

Olivier Geoffroy launched Unto this Last in 2001. Named after a book by Ruskin, the company is inspired by his vision of sustainability: locally produced, environmentally aware and beautifully designed. The workshop, located in the middle of London and open to the public, fuses digitally-controlled cutting tools with Ruskinian craftsmanship to produce competitively priced furniture that is functional and aesthetically pleasing.

## John Iles

John Iles' career has been in practical conservation, community regeneration and capacity building. His last full-time role was as Regeneration Consultant for Anthony Collins Solicitors, working with some of the most hard-pressed communities in England. In 2004, he and his family moved to Uncllys Farm, part of the Guild of St George's Ruskin Land in the middle of the 6,000 acre ancient Wyre Forest. There, he founded the Community Land Trust to manage around 140 Ha of orchards, meadows and oak forest engaging with many different volunteers and landowners. He is a Director of the Guild of St George.

## Jenny Robbins

Jenny Robbins is a graduate in Commerce and her early career was in stock broking in Birmingham. Jenny became involved in the project run by John Iles in the Wyre Forest some 9 years ago as a local landowner. She is a Director of the Guild of St George and the Wyre Community Land Trust and Chairs the Friends of Bewdley Museum.



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This event is part of  
**Humanities in Public's  
World strand of events**

**More details can be found at:**

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The next Humanities in Public Festival will take place between September 20-16 and June 2017 and will be on the theme of 'Greater Manchester and Northern Identity'. The Festival will be part of a programme of events from across the whole of Manchester Metropolitan University called *D/Evolving Manchester*.