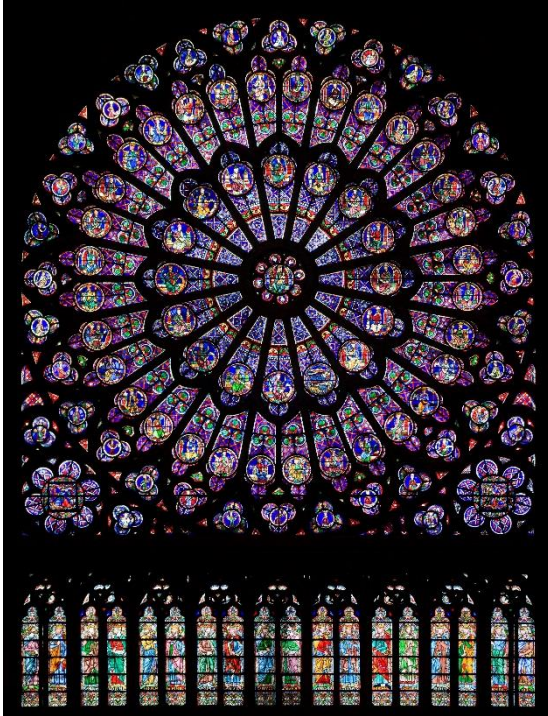


LECTURE: 8 July 2021

Presenter: Andrew Spira

Feeling versus thought, passion versus ideas: the battle between colour and line in Western European art.



This lecture is about the status of COLOUR and SUBJECT MATTER in the history of western art, and the notion that subject-matter invites viewers to *think* about art, whereas colour elicits a more subjective *feeling*-response to it. In Renaissance Florence, several artists maintained that the most important part of an image was its subject matter (which could be caught in a black-and-white print or drawing) and that colour was merely an ‘enhancement’. The Venetians disagreed; they proposed that the drawing of a picture was just its ‘body’, but that it was colour that gave it a ‘soul’. The debate flared up at the French Royal Academy in the seventeenth century when advocates of drawing gathered under the flag of Poussin and colourists sided with Rubens. You would think that the debate might come to rest when colour perception was elevated to the level of a science by Newton at the beginning of the 18th century. But it didn’t; it resurfaced at the beginning of the twentieth century when the monochrome paintings of Picasso and the Cubists competed with the exuberant colourism of Matisse and the Fauves. This lecture will explore this eye-opening debate.

Andrew Spira studied at the Courtauld Institute and Kings College, London. For several years, he worked at the Temple Gallery, London (specialists in Byzantine, Russian and Greek icons) and as a curator at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Subsequently he was Programme Director at Christie’s Education for 14 years. Besides lecturing extensively on a wide range of subjects, he has taken numerous groups on cultural visits to sites all over Europe. His book *The Avant-Garde Icon*, on the relationship between Russian icons and Russian Avant-Garde art, was published in 2008. A two-volume reflection on the notion of personal identity and cultural conventions was published by Bloomsbury in July last year.

