

**ONLOOKER 1921-2021: A CENTENARY ONLINE CONFERENCE CELEBRATING WILLIAM ORPEN AND AN ONLOOKER IN FRANCE**

Université d'Artois, Arras, France

Thursday October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Artois research group: Textes et Cultures (EA 4028), research team "TransLittéraires"

International Online Conference co-organised by Anne Cormican (UCD), Caroline Gallois (Artois), Adrian Grafe (Artois)

Zoom meeting invitation - Réunion Zoom de adrian grafe

7 oct. 2021 09:30 AM Paris

Zoom codes :

<https://univ-artois-fr.zoom.us/j/98045060339?pwd=dWxBSE13ci9Ob2ZucW9zczd3VGJqZz09>

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Best known nowadays as a "war painter", William Orpen (1878-1931), a Hiberno-English painter born in Dublin, who spent most of his life in London, is a fascinating, multi-faceted figure, influenced by all the major European aesthetic trends of his time (Impressionism, post-Impressionism, and Modernism). In fact, his work and aesthetic aims arguably go far beyond other war painters such as Paul Nash or John Singer Sergeant. Earning his living as a society portraitist, the constantly-restless Orpen aspired to a more meaningful artistic life. In 1917, Orpen managed to get himself officially appointed as a war artist by the British Department of Information, and to be sent to France on April 8, 1917, Easter Sunday, the eve of the Battle of Arras, the bombing of which Orpen experienced. Based in Hédin, Orpen received permission from General Charteris, head of British Intelligence, to go wherever he wanted. He remained in France until the end of the war and beyond, having been commissioned to paint the meetings leading up to the Treaty of Versailles (1919). In 1918, Orpen met Yvonne Aupicq, the woman who became his mistress, and of whom he painted magnificent portraits. Staying in France with Aupicq, living in Paris, he wrote *An Onlooker in France* in 1920-21. Published in 1921, it is a text interspersed with numerous reproductions of paintings and drawings. *Onlooker* combines the account of Orpen's experience of the

Great War and his testimony (despite being appointed to the rank of Major, Orpen was a non-combatant, only an observer, as the title of his book indicates)—a tribute to the soldiers in the field, to their courage and dignity. A hundred years on from the publication of *An Onlooker in France*, this day conference, a collaboration between Orpen specialists and art historians, and literary scholars, in turn pays tribute to Orpen's singularity as painter, draughtsman, war artist, portraitist, and writer. We will also explore the reception of Orpen's work, the artistic influences upon him and his role in France in relation to another artist, Percy Wyndham Lewis, first a commissioned officer (unlike Orpen) and later, like Orpen, an official war artist. And we will of course consider the text and illustrations of *Onlooker*.

## **PROGRAMME**

**10.00 Welcome and Introductions**

**10.15 Caroline Gallois (Artois University): Drawing the line: William Orpen's illustrated war correspondence**

**10.45 Nele Putz (Eichstätt Catholic University; DFK – German Centre for History of Art, Paris): Beyond Citations and Idioms: Orpen as Master Polystylist**

**11.15 Break**

**11.30 Anne-Pascale Bruneau (Paris-Nanterre University): Staging the Salient: Orpen, Lewis and the Representation of War**

**12.00 Adrian Grafe (Artois University): Reflections on *Onlooker*, Orpen and Madame Blanche**

**12.30 Break for lunch**

**14.00 Anne Cormican (UCD): Orpen, the Mildura collection and R.D. Eliott**

**14.30 Isabelle Gadoin (Poitiers University): Orpen's painterly "silence" and aesthetics of "non finito" in the *Onlooker* illustrations**

**15.00 Michael F. Zimmermann (Eichstätt Catholic University): Orpen, International Naturalism, and Versailles, 1919**

**15.45 Final discussion, conclusion**



**William Orpen, Zonnebeke (1918)**