

KYRLE PROBUS 3 NOVEMBER 2016

The colourful and often dramatic stories of three famous late artists were vividly brought back to life by Kyrle Probus club member Brian Wozencroft, at the club meeting on Thursday 3 November.

Brian's talk, titled 'Three of the Best', was aided by colour slides and depicted a range of controversial paintings. The talk outlined the lives of Italian-born Merisi da Caravaggio (1571-1610); French Impressionist Edouard Manet (1832-1883) and the English artist Dame Laura Knight, (1877-1970).



Caravaggio died alone on a beach aged just 38 after surviving numerous violent episodes, one of which landed him in prison for assault. But his unique painting style developed from an early age – he was just 11 when he was sent to Milan to serve a four year apprenticeship with the artist Petrazano, said to have been a pupil of Titian.

His style matured into the instantly recognizable form now admired by countless people around the world. One of his works, known as 'The Cardsharps' illustrates his use of the technique he became famous for known as chiaroscuro, or intense contrasting of light and dark.

"Caravaggio used it to create drama, accentuating the effect by the use of a single light source, or Tenebrism," said Brian. Another iconic work 'The Execution of John the Baptist', is the only painting that he is known to have signed. Sadly, after suffering a serious facial wound he developed a fatal fever.

Manet was for many years one of Brian's favourite artists, partly due to being 'wow'd' by his painting 'The Fifer' or 'The Flautist'.

"His other paintings led me to appreciate all the French Impressionists and my choosing painting as a pastime," he said. Manet's famous 'Luncheon on the Grass' featuring nude and semi-nude girls caused a huge scandal at the time. His later 'Olympia', although admired by Napoleon III, also

triggered public outrage. The model was Manet's 19-year-old mistress. Manet was awarded the Legion de Honeur in 1881 and thousands lined the streets of Paris at his funeral procession in 1883. The familiar 'Bar at the Folies Bergeres' was his last major work.

Dame Laura Knight, now famous for her 'Self Portrait', was also a young talent and won a scholarship to Nottingham School of Art when she was thirteen. In 1936 she became the first woman to be made a full member of the Royal Academy. At the end of World War Two she was sent to Nuremberg to record and paint her impressions of the War Crimes Trial.