

The Silver Society – British Silver: An Introductory Course 2013

The 2013 Silver Society course was one of most pleasant and informative experiences I have had a pleasure to take part in. Timothy Schroder and Lucy Morton were so warm and made everyone in the group feel very much at home. The diverse group of participants created a rich atmosphere in which everyone could bring their own personal interests and insight to each lecture session. Our interest in silver brought us together and made for a most energizing mix, with everyone having something valuable to contribute.

The first part of each session, Tim took us on a very concise, detailed and colourful journey into the world of silver throughout the centuries and examined the social, cultural and political context in which the craft took shape and evolved. He challenged and engaged us with the subject matter while reminding us to think about styles and movements within a broader historical context.

The expertise of the guest speakers who joined us for the second part of each session only added to the already rich content of the course and provided a more in-depth understanding of silver as a decorative art form. David Cawte let us meander with him through his career as a silversmith with beautiful examples of his work and wonderful anecdotes. His talk was a real highlight for me as it allowed me a look into the world of a practicing silversmith and fostered a real appreciation for the art of silversmithing. The handling session at Christie's was one of the best evenings of the course as it allowed us to get up close and personal with so many different objects. As Tim said, the best way to understand an object is to examine it, not just with your eyes but with your hands so that you can understand every nuance. He couldn't have been more correct! I took away so much from the handling session as the nervousness of handling such precious objects was worn away as I was able look at them as not just beautiful works of art but also as practical and useful wares. Many thanks to Harry Williams Bulkeley, head of Christie's Silver Department for being such a wonderful host and for allowing us such unique access.

My reasons for signing up for this course was to gain a better understanding of silver in order to pursue a thesis topic on the subject. I was given a great foundation in which to narrow the focus of my research and hope to be able to share that with the Silver Society in the near future. I have come away even more excited and passionate about the topic and want to learn even more. I would like to thank the Society for their generosity in awarding me a bursary so that I could attend the course. I am very grateful for this unique opportunity.

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