

## From the Old Brewery S1-EP2.mp3

**Voiceover** [00:00:03] This podcast is brought to you by the University of Aberdeen.

**Suk-Jun Kim** [00:00:22] In this episode, we have invited Marianne Fossaluzza our Ph.D. student who is researching the photographic collection of Edward Atkinson Hornel in the National Trust for Scotland. Marianne studied art history and iconography as an undergraduate student, and museum studies and museology for her master's degree, both at the École du Louvre in Paris. Now, in her second year of her PhD study, she has put up an exhibition titled *E.A. Hornel: A Painter Behind the Camera* in Drum Castle, Aberdeenshire, from May 1st to December 19<sup>th</sup> this year. Welcome, Marianne.

**Marianne** [00:01:05] Thank you.

**Suk-Jun Kim** [00:01:06] So before we get to talk about your research, I'm really curious about your life before that. So from your bio, I see that you have had some very interesting life, if I can say. Studying in Paris and then working in Scotland, you know, so could you tell us a little bit about that journey before Aberdeen?

**Marianne** [00:01:27] Yes. Well, first of all, let me thank you for inviting me here. But to answer your question, I started life as obsessed with dinosaurs, I could tell you hundreds of names without any kind of mistake. And it's basically slowly from this obsession, I discovered first, that you can have other things in the ground, and that's archaeology. And then that you can put other things in a museum. And that was, you know, discovering art in general. So from there, I pretty much built up a passion for art, museums and heritage. So I tried to pursue it, and in France, one of the best schools to go to and when you want to work in museums is the École du Louvre, so that's where I started. But I then got the opportunity to do an Erasmus year in Leiden University in the Netherlands, which was fantastic to, you know, to live there, to discover the culture. And, you know, you always get a different perspective when you leave your own country.

**Suk-Jun Kim** [00:02:42] You're right, yes.

**Marianne** [00:02:44] Yeah, kind of outsider point of view, which I really enjoyed. And when the Erasmus year finished, I didn't really want to go back to France just yet. So I joined a language assistant programme. And to be honest, the only country that didn't require the TOEFL language test was the United Kingdom. So that's where I went and I got sent to Scotland, which was my first wish. So I started in Dundee, taught French for a year. And so when my contract ended, I tried to go back to, you know, my branch, my roots, so heritage. And I was very lucky because at that time, the National Trust for Scotland was recruiting for a nationwide inventory project called *Project Reveal*.

**Suk-Jun Kim** [00:03:39] Mm-Hmm.

**Marianne** [00:03:42] And I joined as part of a 30-ish people team, and we basically went around each and every property of the Trust. My team was Aberdeenshire and Angus.

**Suk-Jun Kim** [00:03:54] I see.

**Marianne** [00:03:56] And we... Basically, in each property, we went in each room and we scanned every object, recording it in the database. And from there, it's at the end of this project that a little team, in partnership with the Trust, the University of Aberdeen and the

University of Edinburgh, got together to try and put up this project of working on the photographic collection of Edward Hornel. Because it is in the care of the Trust, so the Trust was very much involved. It was initially to be a doctoral training partnership, so AHRC funded.

**Suk-Jun Kim** [00:04:39] Yes.

**Marianne** [00:04:41] And they were recruiting a student to carry on that project. And I just was very, very lucky because I applied to it and happened to get it! Which, I didn't think would be possible because, yeah, in my weird, let's say, journey, I didn't have a master thesis – for complicated reasons – and I was convinced that I could never do a PhD because in France, if you don't have a master thesis, you're not going to be able to start a PhD. So it was a huge and very great surprise.

**Suk-Jun Kim** [00:05:16] That's fascinating journey. And so your research is on E.A. Hornel's collection. Can you tell us just briefly about who he is?

**Marianne** [00:05:25] So Hornel was born in Australia, actually, from British parents who had tried to go to Australia to make their fortunes. But it didn't quite work out, so they very quickly came back to Scotland and moved back in Kirkcudbright, where they had been leaving from. And there he had a very normal, you know, classic education, but then was sent to the Edinburgh School of Arts, which he didn't quite enjoy. He felt it was really, like, stilted, just copying, you know, from marbles. And all of that is not really interesting. He went to the Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts in Belgium afterwards, which was for him much more interesting, he discovered a good use of colour that he very quickly implemented in his own work. And when he came back to Scotland, he started working on subjects that were very local at first, like a view of his garden in Kirkcudbright, or peasants working the fields around Kirkcudbright. He then met George Henry, with whom he quickly formed a very good artistic partnership, very fruitful. They worked together on what might be one of his most well-known pieces, *Bringing in the Mistletoe*, which is a huge painting on a Celtic procession, bringing in, you know, the mistletoe, as the name suggests. Quickly after that, he went to Japan with George Henry, and with funds from his dealer Alexander Reid, and that was, like, a pivotal time for him. After Japan, when he came back, his Japanese paintings proved extremely successful. And it really established a base for him to work on, very colourful and happy and slightly exotic paintings that were very successful. And he started reproducing that method, with Scottish models first, but also with models from Sri Lanka, where he went in 1907, and then Japan and Myanmar, where he went in 1921. And from there, his painting became very formulaic. It was pretty much always some kind of variation of young girls in idyllic settings in very, very colourful and happy environments.

**Suk-Jun Kim** [00:08:17] It's interesting because you never mentioned him being a photographer. Him being a painter, that makes sense. But your research is actually on his photography collection. So is he was he... was he a painter or was he a photographer?

**Marianne** [00:08:35] So, officially, and how he presented himself, was as a painter. His photographic practise was more there to support his painted practise. Basically, even though he has.... well, he amassed throughout his life a massive collection – we're talking, you know, seventeen hundred images – he never really discussed photography. He didn't display his photographs; they never were in exhibitions because that was not their point. And even if, you know, there was an ongoing debate at the end of the 19th century beginning of the 20th century, is photography an art or not? Is it just mimicking life? He

never really took a position on that, at least not that I have found in any of his writing. I think that for him, photography was more a tool, you know, kind of how you would use a sketchbook to prepare your paintings. He used photographs. And that's why he never really considered himself as a photographer because photography was in service of his painting.

**Suk-Jun Kim** [00:09:52] Let's talk a little bit about the, uh, his photographic collection that you are researching. What are the main subjects of his interest in his collection?

**Marianne** [00:10:03] Well, as the photographs are kind of a database of motifs, poses and items, the themes of the photographs very much mirror, uh, with the themes of the paintings. So we're talking, most of the time, girls and women, mostly between 10 and 15.

**Suk-Jun Kim** [00:10:23] Mm-Hmm.

**Marianne** [00:10:24] We do not have the names and identity of the models, so it is all in this estimate. The collection can be divided, well, pretty much geographically, in a way. The biggest group of photographs is the one from Scotland. Hornel photographed, mostly in his home and studio of Broughton House, but there are also quite a few images captured of girls playing in the lovely landscapes around Kirkcudbright. In terms of numbers, photographs from Sri Lanka make the second biggest group. There he had an interest for work like tea picking, pearl fishing, and lace making – although pearl fishing did not make it into his paintings – as well as daily life activities like carrying water, making music or praying. The third group are images from Japan, quite a few of which have actually been acquired and not taken by himself. There it is overwhelmingly photographs of geisha, whether dancing, playing music, walking in the streets, just looking pretty and wonderful in great vegetation... all of that kind of things. But there are a few landscapes as well. And finally, the smallest group is from Myanmar, where he took only about 25 to 30 images, if I'm correct, all of dancers or musicians. You do have a few, as well, pictures of cattle, of vegetation, to use as a model for his painting, but yeah, that's pretty much covering all of the collection.

**Suk-Jun Kim** [00:12:24] So it seems like, based on what you're saying, that Hornel was very interested in photographing women and girls, mostly working class, and also a chunk of his collection was about the girls in Sri Lanka, and was also in the East. Do you see that that, uh, there was a kind of reflection of his fascination for a certain working class and also a certain gender and also certain locality, for example like East? Do you see that tendency there?

**Marianne** [00:13:00] I think there is definitely a specific interest, yes, towards girls and women in general, and exotic settings. So first Sri Lanka, then Japan, which probably was, you know, the matrix of his interest for the East, and Myanmar, lastly. That is why the focus, well, some of the focus... foci? of my research are gender and otherness, because there is, I feel, something to ask about the fact that, you know, a middle-aged, rather well-off so middle upper class, British man was taking dozens and dozens of pictures of girls... well of girls at home and abroad. I think it was... First of all, I want to add that there is very, very probably nothing weird to think about, because whenever I say, "Oh, he has hundreds of pictures of girls", people always raise an eyebrow. No, there is no proof of that. But it was more... kind of... to build these models as the other. You have to think that at the end of the 19th early 20th century, industrialisation was going full speed in Britain. And a lot of people, especially, you know, rich industrials and all of that, were getting very nostalgic for, you know, a simpler time. And the figure of the girl, at least in Victorian morals, was

pictured as, you know, the sheltered flower, who is protected from the world, doesn't go out and all of that. So by taking pictures of girls and then turning them into paintings, he was really depicting the other of, you know, rich men, upper class industrial, by taking, you know, young girls in idyllic settings. It was really, I think, feeding on this nostalgia for those simpler times. And add to that the huge impact of *Japonisme* in Europe in general, so this huge craze for Japan... He says himself that it is one of the reasons he went to Japan, because it was so popular and he was kind of swept in the movement. So he was, you know, an acute businessman, I would say, to pick subjects that would really talk to his customers.

**Suk-Jun Kim** [00:15:54] Was he successful as an artist?

**Marianne** [00:15:58] At the beginning of his career, so up until, you know, I would say the first trip to Japan in 1893 to 94, moderately. He was very much in line with the cliché of the artist without money that is struggling from painting to painting, hoping to sell it and all of that. But still had a few breakthroughs here and there, including with, you know, *Bringing in the Mistletoe*, which was quite a big break. But after coming back from Japan, he had an exhibition put up at his dealer's, Alexander Reid, and pretty much all of the paintings bar from, if I remember, three or four were sold, which was a huge hit because there were, I think if I remember well, between 40 and 45. So you have to imagine, like, selling 40 paintings in one go. It was huge.

**Suk-Jun Kim** [00:17:02] That's, uh, that's amazing.

**Marianne** [00:17:02] Yeah. He didn't always have, you know, that huge spike of success. But after that, he kind of built a steady customer base that was interested in his declination of young girls in either exotic settings or, you know, very lovely and idyllic Scottish settings. So he wasn't like, insanely successful, but he still managed to maintain a steady source of income and provide his base of customers with paintings that remained successful pretty much until he died. And in Kirkcudbright, he was one of the most well-off people and one of the most important people around, so, yeah, all things considered, I think that at least in his own mind, he was successful.

**Suk-Jun Kim** [00:17:59] And these buyers are, they are mostly the well-off, the urban, you know, the upper-class kind of people?

**Marianne** [00:18:08] Yes, mostly. So he joined, you know, big private collections like the collection of William Burrell, but also he was acquired by quite a few museums around Britain, so mainly in Scotland, but not only. And he had a few successful forays here and there in exhibitions in Belgium and in the U.S.A. You have a few of his paintings here and there in the U.S.A., where the same, let's say, type, general type of people, so, you know, well-off white men, acquired some of his painting, and they have since then entered some of the American collections.

**Suk-Jun Kim** [00:18:56] Let's maybe change our gear and talk about your research and, you know, practicalities. So how do you go about researching the collection? It seems, it's simply a huge collection, and maybe can you explain to us briefly about, you know, your methodology and practicalities, if you will?

**Marianne** [00:19:16] Yes. So you are extremely right in saying that this is a huge collection, because seventeen hundreds pictures, I could never process that on my own. It would probably take me far more than three years. So as I knew I couldn't process them all

in my head, I turned to a qualitative data analysis software called Nvivo. So it allowed me to encode each image with information like, for example, the model's expression, the props he used, the number and gender of the models, et cetera, as well as technical aspects like if it is a glass plate negative or a print, these kind of things. And by processing all of the images like that in the software, I was also able to create profiles for the models and find the photos in which each of them appeared. Because that was one of the big problems that you could see, before, that there were some reoccurring models, but it was very difficult to tie them all to each of their photographs, which the software allowed, which was amazing. So what this work gave me was a searchable database, as well as numbers and statistics spanning the whole collection. So it makes linking the photographs with the paintings they inspired much easier. And as it is also something I can do in the software – linking the paintings together with the photographs, I mean – it allows me to have everything in one place and see patterns emerge much more easily. So that's how I go about processing the collection itself. And then you add to that, I feel, kind of the mandatory background reading that every Ph.D. student goes through. So photography theory, material culture, so Elizabeth Edwards, questions of Orientalism with Edward Saïd... So all of these readings inform how I perceive the photographic collection, what I look for in each image, and give me keys for interpreting the data I obtained with Nvivo.

**Suk-Jun Kim** [00:21:36] Alright that's fascinating. So, of course, the collection that you have, this is a huge collection is all, if you'll say, analogue and material based, but then in order to have the occasion to gain insight and, you know, in-depth understanding of the collections, you need to use technology. So this term, this area, what the field calls digital humanities, is really, you know, in action with your research, isn't it?

**Marianne** [00:22:05] Yes, it very much feels like it. I'm also quite indebted to the digitisation programme that was conducted in 2015 on the Hornel collection, because if this hadn't been done – because now there is, you know, a digital image of each of the photographs, whether glass plate negatives or prints – I wouldn't have been able to import all of that into Nvivo, because I wouldn't have had files to do that. So I feel that a lot of this Ph.D. has been made possible thanks to technology, whether digitisation or softwares that, you know, allow to juggle with massive amounts of data like Nvivo. Because, you know, it is said that, you know, the brain is one of the most amazing computers, but I cannot process seventeen hundred images and keep all of this data in my head and remember all of that. So yeah, a lot of the hard work is done by the software, I must admit.

**Suk-Jun Kim** [00:23:17] This is wonderful. So let's talk about your supervisor. So, your supervisors are Dr Áine Larkin and Professor Ed Welch, they are, of course, supervising your research. I wonder, this might be quite interesting to other colleagues, the other PGR students, because building a good relationship with, uh, with your supervisor is one of the key elements towards the success of your research, isn't it? So how are you... How are you three working together for your project? What's your... Do you have any strategy or any kind of habitual way of working with them and maybe, you know, uh, to build a good relationship and continue that relationship for your project?

**Marianne** [00:24:09] So I think that the one key to our relationship has been honesty, for the three of us, because... Honesty, as in, you know, how I feel and how I function. A good example is that I am very bad with deadlines. Not necessarily, you know, missing them, but it's just that, if it's writing, for example, I'm going to research, research, research, until we get to, like, two three days before the deadline. And then I cram all the writing in that time, which is extremely stressful. And I realised very quickly that, you know, at a PH.D. scale, it is not an option. I cannot write a full Ph.D. in, like, a week or two. So when we

started working together, you know, I honestly told them about all of that. And I have to say that I feel very lucky because both Áine and Ed are amazingly kind and understanding people, and we worked, you know, from this honesty, from how... how to find the best way to proceed for me. And what we came to was, we have regular meetings. In normal times, about once a month. In pandemic time, when I felt very isolated at home, it was one every two weeks, especially because I was struggling a bit to... with motivation and all of that, kind of a pandemic burnout kind of thing, so every two week was very helpful. And each meeting we set up little objectives for the next one. So it can be, you know, a little bit of writing, it can be having read this or that chapter or this book, or it can be having processed that many images in the collection. So all of these little objectives, when we come, let's say, two or three days before the meeting, I would send a little summary, update or whatever relevant to them. And then we would discuss it during the meeting and then go back and do it again. Just repeat it. And it works really well for me because at least instead of, you know, massive deadlines that become very stressful, I just have a lot of very small deadlines. And it also allows me to touch base with them very regularly and again being honest about, you know, my feelings. Have I managed to work well this time? Not well? Why? And then we can really work from there together to either find ways to accommodate or determine better suited objectives. So it's really, you know, touching base very frequently, to keep adapting to, either the state I'm in, or the amount of work I can put in. And it has really, really worked well, and I'm very grateful for having two amazing supervisors like Áine and Ed.

**Suk-Jun Kim** [00:27:20] Yeah. So it seems like based on what you're saying, the two elements are kind of a key to, um, to the building up and establishing of this good relationship, especially for you, and for Áine and Ed is, one is the honesty.

**Marianne** [00:27:39] Yes.

**Suk-Jun Kim** [00:27:40] So we are all, you know, you guys are all on the same page. And the second is that structure, each supervision meeting, you know, in a small way, so bit by bit, like, small steps. So I think that's, those are really good advice for our students.

**Marianne** [00:28:01] It really works for me because it can be really daunting task. So chipping little bits of it, you know, has a very reassuring feeling. It feels much more doable.

**Suk-Jun Kim** [00:28:12] What's your hope for your research? What, you know, if you were, what significance, what impact do you want to make with your research?

**Marianne** [00:28:23] So I feel that one of the biggest hopes I have is to give a bit more agency to the models in Hornel's photographs. Because they are kind of nameless persons whose face are, you know, all over his paintings, but we know nothing about them. It's probably going to be quite tricky to find a lot of information, but, you know, talk a bit more about them, about their relationship with Hornel, about how he –in his kind of position of power, as, you know, the artist, the notable – used their image to, well, become quite successful. And so discuss a bit how this worked, how this process worked, and how... What are the things at play when going from the photograph to the painting? So, yes, talking a bit more about the models and a tiny bit less about Hornel. But in this way, you know, really informing Hornel's practise, understanding how it worked, so a better understanding of the artist as well. In terms of significance and impact, well, that would be that, that, you know, people come out either... I'm thinking of the exhibition because it's quite a big thing at the moment, but either of the exhibition, or a talk, or whatever way they engage with my research, with a better understanding of how this man based himself on

these girls and really built his painted empire – it feels a bit big to say like that – but on these people and how it worked. Not, you know, necessarily in a judgemental way, but in an understanding way; better, better insight on how he worked and how, let's say anonymous his models are when he is such a big name.

**Suk-Jun Kim** [00:30:38] Mm hmm. So, you mentioned the exhibition, your current exhibition titled *E.A. Hornel: A Painter Behind the Camera*, which is currently on display in Drum Castle. So could you tell us a little bit more about that, and what will we be able to enjoy when we visit that exhibition?

**Marianne** [00:31:00] So this exhibition is a little... it's a spinoff of a bigger exhibition that took place in the City Arts Centre in Edinburgh, in partnership between Museums Edinburgh and the National Trust for Scotland. It was titled *E.A. Hornel: From Camera to Canvas*, and this exhibition really put side by side the photographs and the paintings to show, like, the correspondences between both. My little exhibition, so *A Painter Behind the Camera*, only displays photographs. I really tried to bring the focus on the photographic collection. I do mention the paintings, of course, because they are very much linked, but they are about the photographs. And it is organised in five rooms, each exploring a different theme, apart from the fifth room, which is a very big one, so it has two themes. So the theme I talk about in the first room is his practise, how he worked, usually, with photography when in Scotland. Second Room is how he staged his photographs and how you can feel some very artistic references, some very, you know, pictorial aspects behind the photographs as, you know, paintings-to-be. Third room is about his use of props and how they became kind of signifiers of identity, you know, they define the person that has them, and how the use of props is really, well, often related to the nationality of the model posing with them. Fourth room is about exoticism, which was a huge part of Hornel's practise. Exoticism, not only in representing foreign models, but also how this seeped in the Scottish photographs. But a different kind of exoticism, not, you know, distant in, let's say, space, but more distant in time, in that kind of timeless place of beauty and happiness. Finally, in the fifth room, I touch upon his interest for music and dance, because we have quite a good selection of photographs depicting dancers and musicians. Because, well, they are vectors of exoticism, because it can be weird movements, instruments that are not usual, like the shamisen in Japan or the koto harp that made its way into his paintings after. And then I finally stop on, it's kind of what I call "what do the photographs look like when Hornel doesn't seem to be interested in turning them into paintings". And that is mostly composed of photographs of men, because you do have a small group – well, small compared to the size the collection – of men that never really made their way into painting, and they have a slightly different feel. That's what I conclude upon and touch upon in this last theme. And I should add, very quickly, that there are a few objects, material objects, like wood panels and bowls and fans, that are extracted from the collection of the National Trust for Scotland, that we have brought in with Vikki Duncan, the curator for the Northeast region, to kind of supplement and inform the exhibition. Especially very relevant, I feel, in the props room.

**Suk-Jun Kim** [00:34:57] Yeah, thanks, thanks so much. So this, again, this exhibition, titled *E.A. Hornel: Painter Behind the Camera*, this is currently on display in Drum Castle, Aberdeenshire, which has already started from May 1st, and it'll continue on until December 19<sup>th</sup> this year. Great! Thanks. Thanks Marianne, it was fascinating to talk to you, your life and your research, and then we get to know more about Hornel and then his photographic collection. Thanks very much for your time!

**Marianne** [00:35:38] Well, thank you again for inviting me and giving me a platform and for the very interesting discussion we had together!

**Voiceover** [00:36:10] This podcast is brought to you by the University of Aberdeen.