

Saturday 10th May 2025
Reardon Smith Lecture Theatre, NMW, Cathays Park, Cardiff
10.30am
A talk by Antony Penrose: The Legendary Lee Miller

The life of Lee Miller was extraordinary by any standards but even more so for an American woman born in 1907. At 18 she took herself off to Paris to study stagecraft, returning to New York in 1926. Fate intervened when she was saved from a car accident in the street by a man of some influence and landed herself a modelling job at Vogue: she was of course extremely beautiful, which helped!

Being photographed wearing designer clothes was never going to be enough for Lee Miller who left for Paris, appointing herself as apprentice to the much-feted photographer Man Ray. She became skilled in her own right and responsible for the iconic images of the human body for which she is remembered today. She became the darling of the artistic glitterati surrounding Man Ray: Picasso, Paul Eluard and Cocteau were close friends. As a gifted and respected photographer she moved between Paris and New York then married an Egyptian businessman and lived, for a while, quite happily in Cairo before she returned to Paris. There she met, and later married, the surrealist painter Roland Penrose with whom she had one son, Antony.

World War 2 drew Lee Miller into the eye of the storm, abandoning her charmed life to embark upon a career as a war photojournalist. At the front she unflinchingly revealed the worst excesses of the war, the degradation, cruelty and inhumanity exposed by her forensic photography. . She experienced difficulties returning to everyday life after the war but she and Penrose bought Farley Farm, Sussex, where once again they became the focus of a cultured artistic circle. There is no doubt that Lee Miller's life was indeed the stuff of legend.

We can reach back in time today to touch her life through her son Antony Penrose. It could not have been easy to be the only child of such a dazzling, mercurial mother but despite his unconventional upbringing he too became an eminent photographer. He has created an arts centre which is a source of artistic education at Farley Farm. He is in a position to give us an unparalleled insight into the extraordinary life of his legendary mother.

The fee of £10 for the talk followed by coffee and biscuits in the Oriel Suite may be paid **prior to the event by BACS: sort code 30-96-26 A/C no. 83447260**. Use reference: **AP + your surname and Christian name (especially if you are a Williams, Jones, Thomas or any other well used Welsh name)**. That enables our treasurer to check who you are; the talk organiser will be informed by the treasurer when your payment has gone through.

Or:

On the day:

Cash, preferably in notes

Or Cheque made payable to Friends Museum Wales

We would like to know prior to the talk if you intend coming to what may be a very popular talk so that we can order enough coffees/teas/biscuits for those who attend.