

Francis Hamel  
THIRTY GARDENS

John Martin Gallery



8. The Winter Garden, Rousham, 2023  
oil on linen, 30 × 40 inches, 76 × 102 cmst

**Ardtornish**  
**Arduaine**  
**Balmoral Cottage**  
**Beckley Park**  
**Bodnant**  
**Broadwoodside**  
**Broughton Grange**  
**Casa Beri**  
**Cripley Meadow Allotments**  
**Dawyck Botanic Gardens**  
**Dumfries House**  
**Filkins**  
**Great Dixter**  
**Iford Manor**  
**Levens Hall**

**Little Sparta**  
**Logan Botanic Garden**  
**Mapperton**  
**Milverton Court**  
**Perch Hill**  
**Rockcliffe**  
**Rousham**  
**Serge Hill**  
**Sezincote**  
**Sissinghurst**  
**Stourhead**  
**Stavordale Priory**  
**Trap Ground Allotments**  
**Winchester Street**  
**Worcester College Gardens**



*Francis Hamel painting at Great Dixter, July 2023*





45. Great Dixter Dawn, 2023  
oil on linen. 40½ x 30 ins, 102 × 76.5 cm

Francis Hamel,  
Rousham, May 2023

# THIRTY GARDENS

I'm not much of a gardener but nothing excites me more than painting a garden. The ends of the day are the best time to paint – when the light is low and the shadows are long. Leaving my paints behind, I start with a good long look. I try to be passive and let the garden speak first. I know from years of painting at Rousham that the best paintings come as a surprise. As you walk into the gardens thinking you know what you're about to paint and on your way to the pre-ordained spot, you're hi-jacked by the unexpected. It's an impulsive response to something that you know may only be there for a few minutes.

I'm looking for a combination of emotion, light and structure. Once the garden has spoken, love at first sight now shifts to surgical procedure. Knowing that you only have a certain amount of time for the operation, you calmly but quickly open the paintbox, line up the instruments, put up the easel and linen panel and, with as much calm as you can muster you open up the view and see what's going on inside. To be on your own in a garden at the start of a day is like taking a drug, your field of vision seems to enlarge. Unlike the wider landscape, the garden is landscape with an agenda.

My brother once described a conference about the dangers of risk averse parenting. A guest speaker asked the audience which moments in their early lives they treasured most and where they were when they happened. The vast majority answered, 'unsupervised play in gardens.' That was certainly my experience. Starting with the Garden of Eden, so much of our storytelling features the garden; gardens have played a talismanic role in British culture offering endless material for painters and writers.

My garden painting started in winter, the landscape deep in refrigerated pause, nothing moving except the low winter light revolving from one day to the next. I started by visiting gardens with good bone structure, topiary gardens and gardens embedded in strongly defined landscape like Bodnant, Levens Hall and Iford Manor. The flower beds were empty but the statuary, clipped yew hedges and empty flower beds gave me plenty to work with. I spent a day in the empty gardens at Levens Hall with low cloud and steady drizzle, the



topiary like luminous sculpture in the frozen winter landscape. Thousands of bedding plants were sitting backstage in the greenhouses waiting for their cue from the sun which decided not to make an appearance while I was there. Landscape painting always feels a bit like garden design as you tailor the landscape to fit the demands of the picture you're trying to make, the joy of working within a garden is the abundance of structure and the underlying story.

It's cold but oddly relaxing painting outside in the winter while everything is in cold storage, once the spring starts, things begin to stir, the performance picks up; as the seasonal anaesthesia wears off the patient starts to move. I'm writing this in May when things are at full tilt, a wet spring and the longer days have fuelled an eruption in the herbaceous borders, the late daffodils and tulips are giving way to cow parsley and apple blossom and the roses are quickly hiding their thorns with lush emerald green foliage. I'm juggling gardens and hardly able to sleep. The head gardeners are beginning to shift from the winter welcome of 'You should come over in a week or two' to the summer welcome of 'you should have seen it last week'. This refrain will last long beyond my September deadline.

With every collection of paintings there comes a moment when the pictures themselves start to tell the story. The collection itself starts to set the agenda. The sheds on the Trap Ground allotments have started to talk to the little neo classical follies at Iford and Stourhead, the topiary at Levens has begun to trespass into other gardens, I have even started to invent gardens with raw materials gathered from gardens miscellaneous.

Taking liberties with the wider landscape is standard practice for painters but I used to feel I had to honour a garden and not venture too far from what the place actually looks like, but I gave up on that a long time ago. Recognisability is not a priority, the aim is simple, try to make a good picture, try to capture the magic. I'm not a map maker. I often wonder, when I leave someone's house with a couple of paintings in the boot of my car, if they would even recognise them.

I was keen from the start of the project not to paint a

collection of grand country house gardens. Parks, allotments, college gardens and even window boxes should all be included. For me the project is an examination of what the garden means, how it relates to the surrounding landscape and how well a series of garden journeys can translate into a collection of single free-standing images. The themes in these paintings are often the same things I would think about if I were painting a still life or a portrait, the spaces between objects, a moment of strong luminous light, painterly accidents rubbing up against the rehearsed gesture of precise brushwork but gardens bring something of their own. The garden is the place where we first try to make sense of the landscape, to paint there and to ignore the Genius Loci would be like painting in a church or temple and to ignore the purpose of the building.

Alexander Pope said that 'instanced in architecture and gardening,... all must be adapted to the genius of the place, and... beauties not forced into it, but resulting from it'.







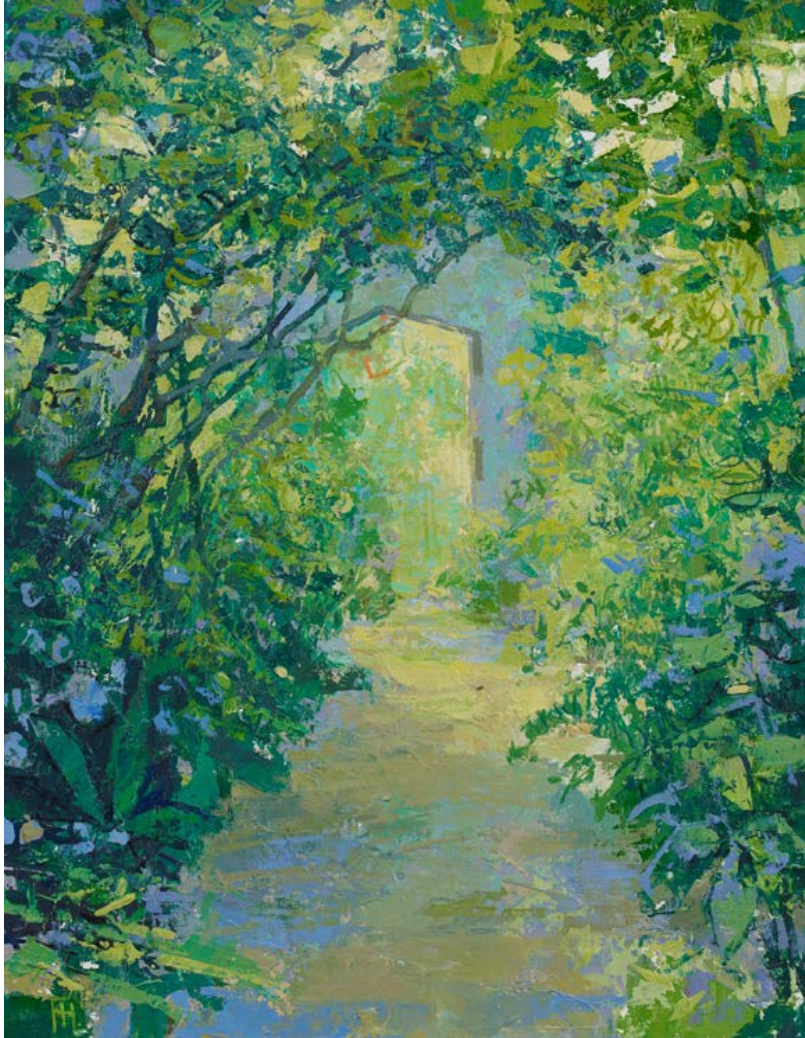
79. Verbascums at Sissinghurst Castle, 2023  
oil on linen, 17 ½ x 8 ins, 44.5 x 20.5 cm





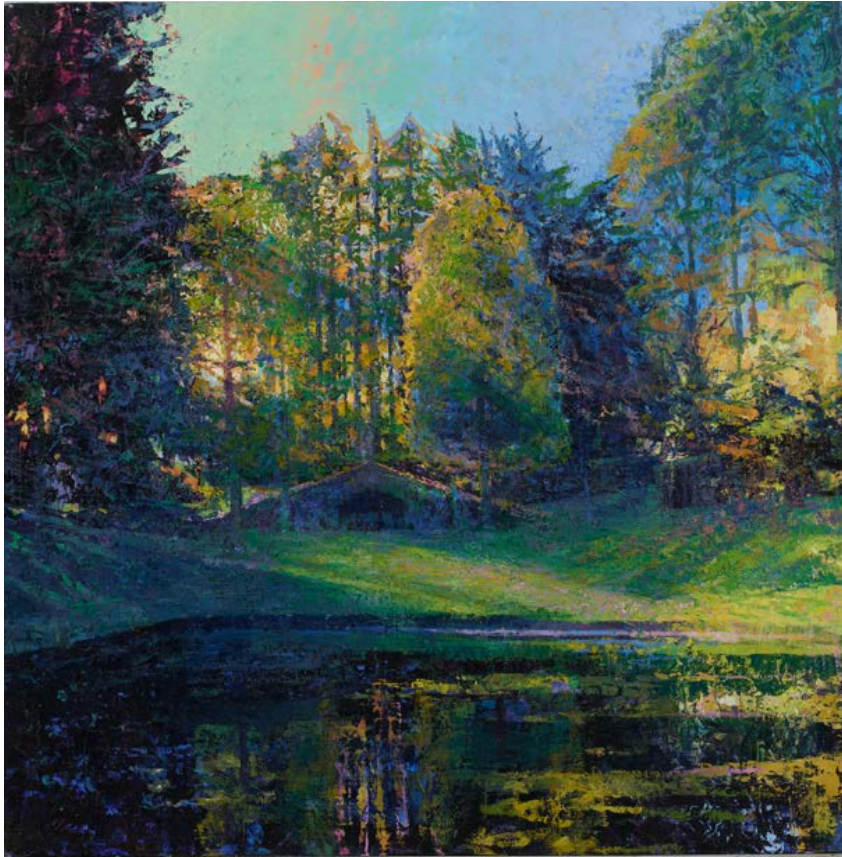
74. The Walled Garden, Logan, 2023  
oil on linen. 40 ¼ x 30 ¾ ins, 102 × 78 cm

ROUSHAM  
VILLA FORNARI  
LEVENS HALL  
BECKLEY PARK  
BODNANT



1. The Gate into the Churchyard, Rousham, 2023  
oil on linen, 18 × 13¾ inches, 46 × 35 cms





3. The Vale of Venus, Rousham, 2023  
oil on linen, 21¼ x 21¼ inches, 55 × 55 cms





5. The Gateway into the Walled Garden, Rousham, 2023  
oil on linen, 22 × 18 inches, 56 × 46 cms



6. Cornus in Bloom by the Dovecote, Rousham, 2023  
oil on linen, 36 × 29¾ inches, 91.5 × 74 cms





7. The Winter Corridor, Rousham, 2023  
oil on linen, 40¼ x 30 inches, 102 × 76 cms



10. The Mulberry In Winter, Rousham, 2023  
oil on linen, 12 × 14½ inches, 30.5 × 37 cms

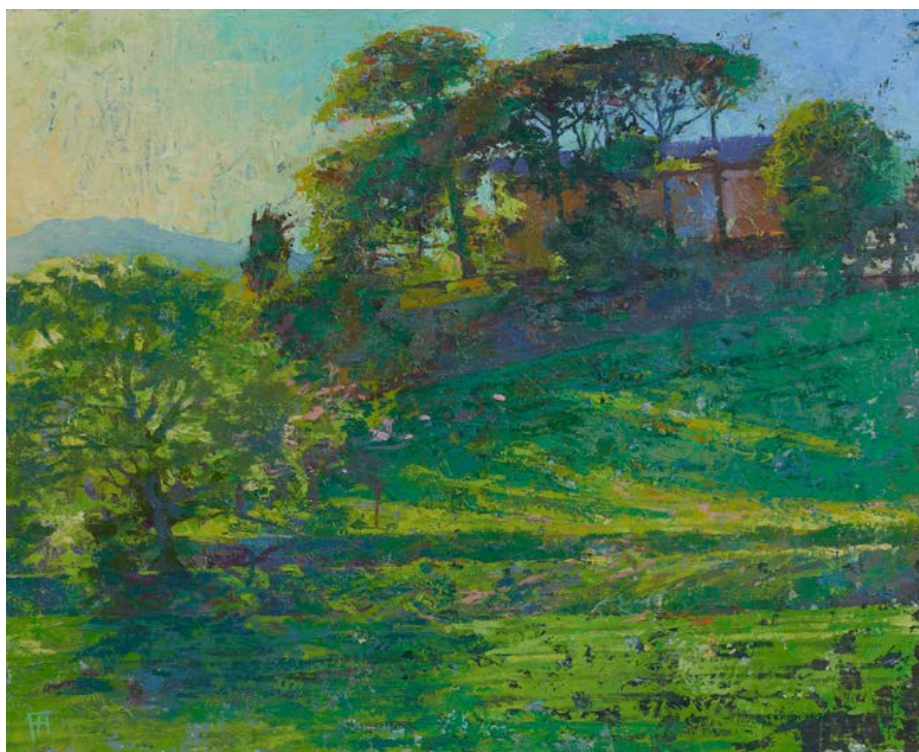




12. Oak Avenue Italy, 2023  
oil on linen, 14½ x 18 inches, 37 × 46 cms



13. The Garden at Villa Fornari, 2023  
oil on linen, 9½ x 10¾ inches, 24 × 27 cms



15. Villa Fornari in June, 2023  
oil on linen, 15 ¼ x 16 ¼ ins, 39 × 41 cm



16. Italian Cornfield in June, 2023  
oil on linen, 23 ½ x 17 ¾ ins, 60 × 45 cm





17. Beckley Park Topiary, 2023  
oil on linen. 9 3/4 x 7 3/4 ins, 25 x 20 cm



18. Levens Hall, 2023  
oil on Linen, 14 ¼ x 18 ins, 36 × 46 cm

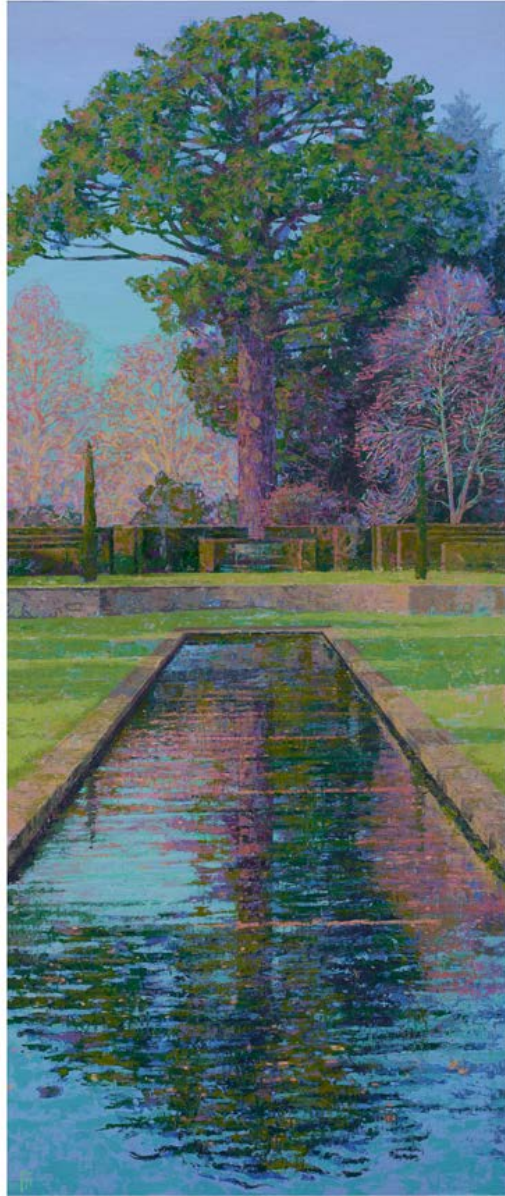


20. Levens Hall Top Hat II, 2023  
oil on linen. 9 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 7 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> ins, 25 × 20 cm

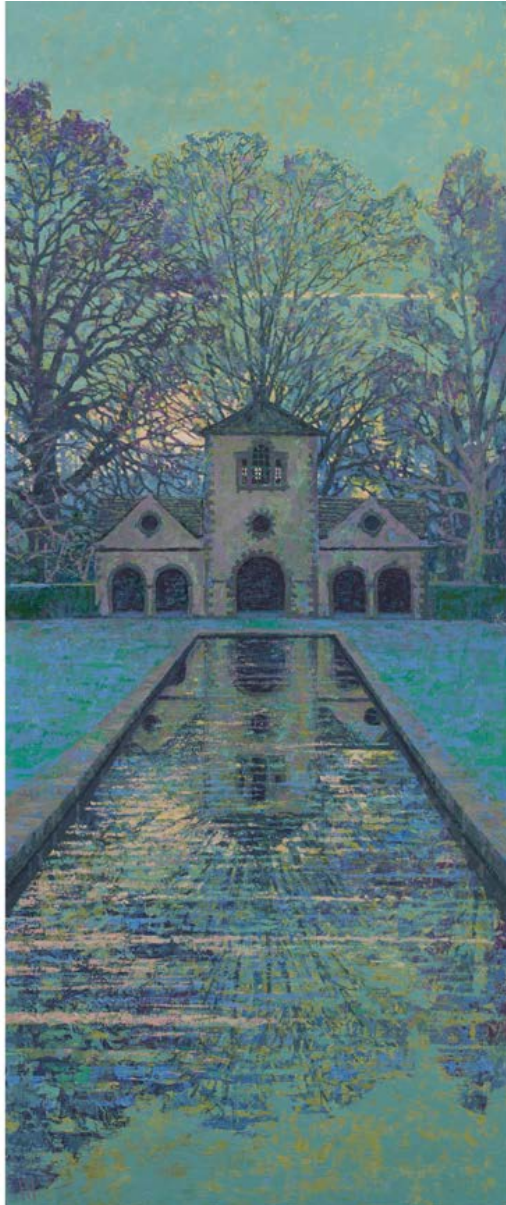


21. Levens, 2023  
oil on linen, 36¼ x 48 inches, 92 × 122 cms £20,000 + vat



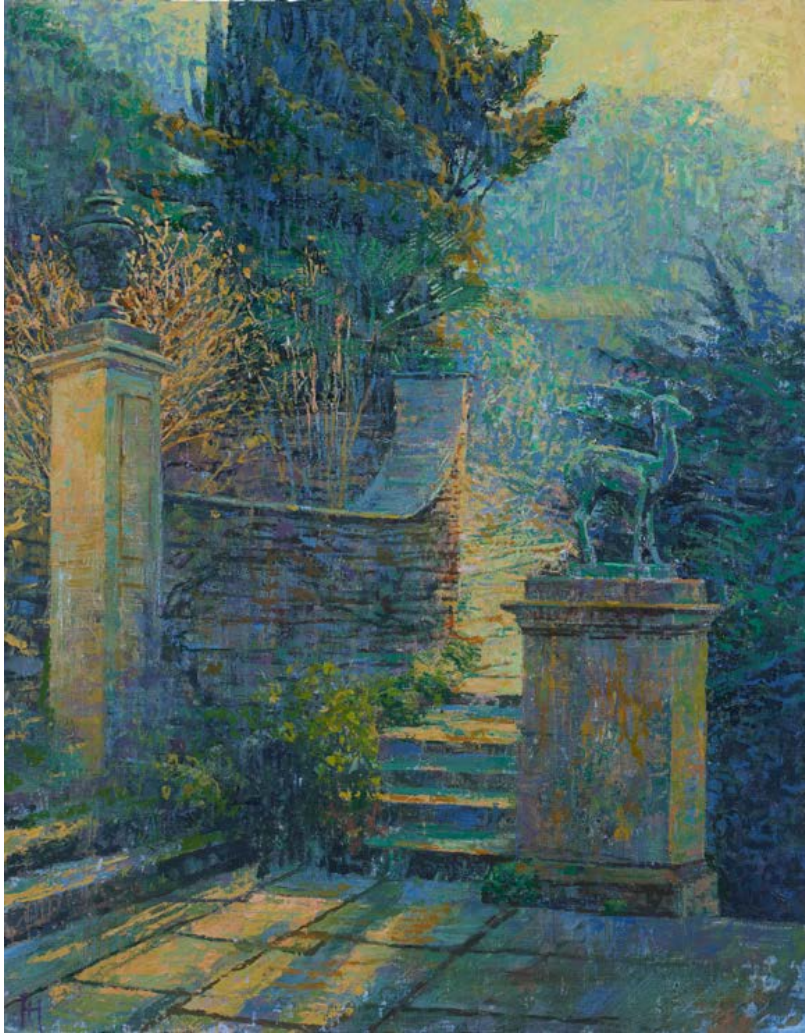


22. Bodnant, the Canal Terrace, 2023  
oil on linen. 48 × 20 ins, 122 × 51 cm £26,000+ vat (pair with 23)



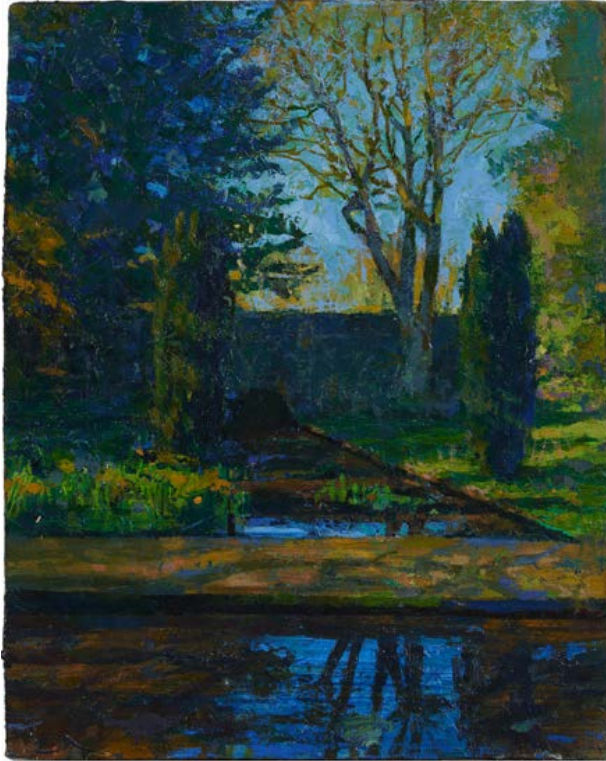
22/ 23. Bodnant, the Canal Terrace, Pin Mill, 2023  
oil on linen. 48 × 20 ins, 122 × 51 cm

IFORD MANOR  
CORNWELL MANOR  
STOURHEAD  
MAPPERTON  
STAVORDALE  
GREAT DIXTER



27. Iford Manor in March, 2023  
oil on linen, 18 × 14¾ inches, 46 × 36 cms





29. Cornwell Manor, 2023  
oil on linen. 9 ¾ x 7 ¾ ins, 25 × 20 cm



31. Stourhead on a Frosty Morning, 2023  
oil on linen, 20 × 24 inches, 51 × 61 cms



33. Mapperton, *The Borrowed Landscape*, 2023  
oil on linen, 16¼ x 30 inches, 41.5 × 76 cms



34. Spring Sun at Mapperton, 2023  
oil on linen. 12 × 14 ins, 30.5 × 35.5 cm





36. The Kitchen Garden at Stavordale, 2023  
oil on linen. 12¼ x 15 ins, 31 x 38 cm

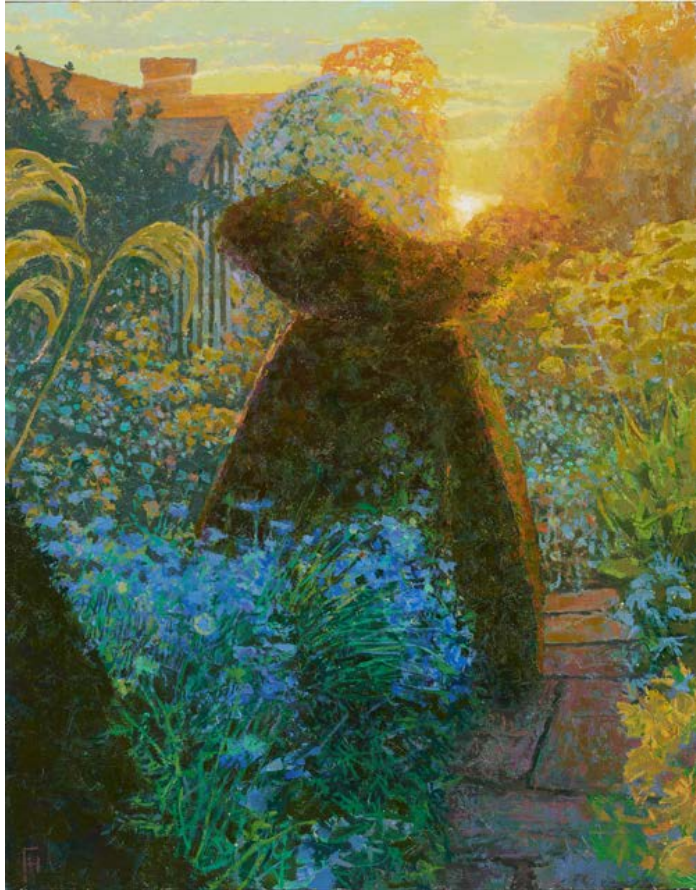


37. The Courtyard Wisteria, 2023  
oil on linen. 12 × 15 ins, 38 × 30 cm



40. Summer at Great Dixter, 2023  
oil on linen. 18 × 14 ins, 46 × 35.5 cms

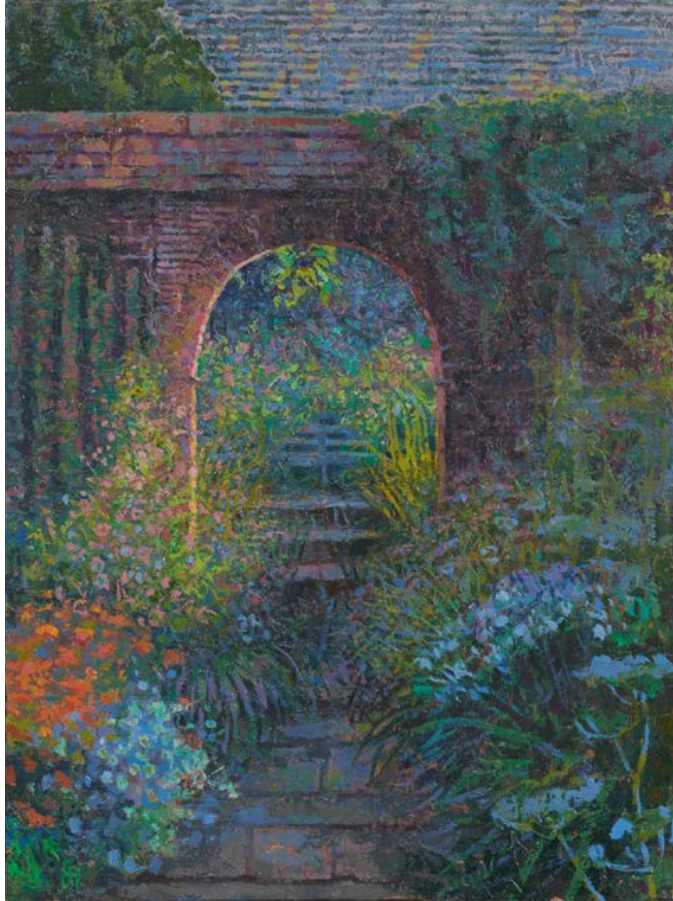




41. Sunset in the Peacock Garden, Great Dixter, 2023  
oil on linen. 18 × 14¼ ins, 46 × 36 cms



43. Great Dexter, Topiary, 2023  
oil on linen. 12 × 15 ins, 38 × 30 cms

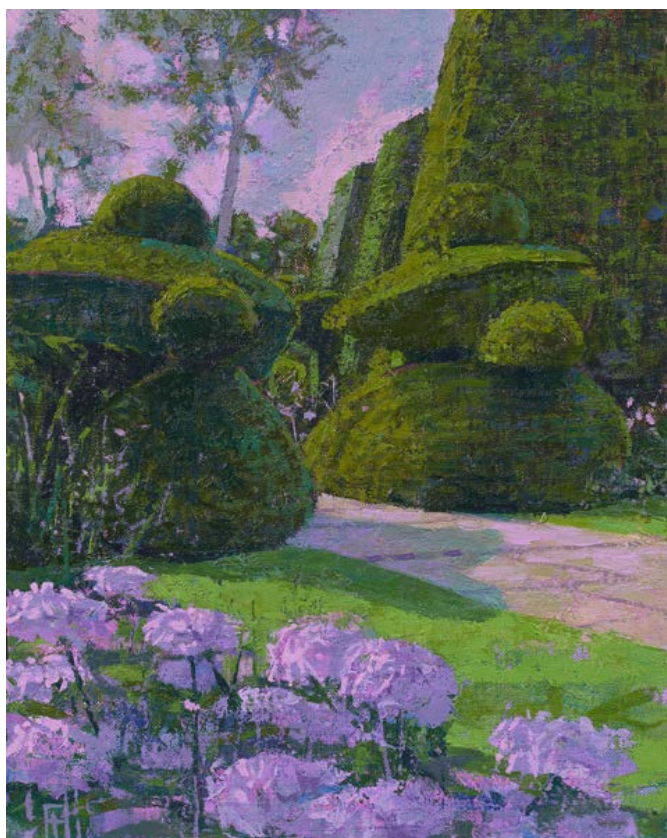


44. Dawn Sunshine at Dexter, 2023  
oil on linen. 12 × 9 ins, 30.5 × 23 cms





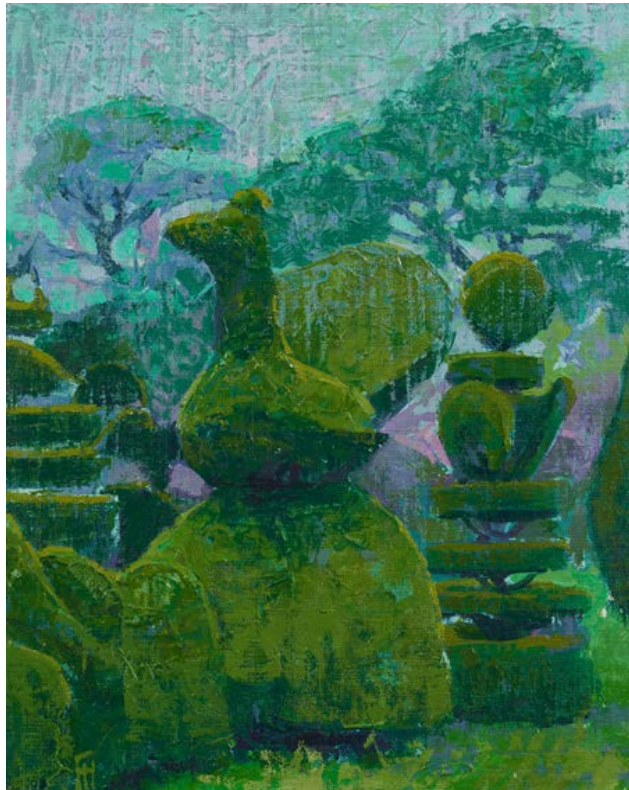
46. Great Dixter in the Evening Sun, 2023  
oil on linen, 36 × 48 inches, 91 × 122 cms



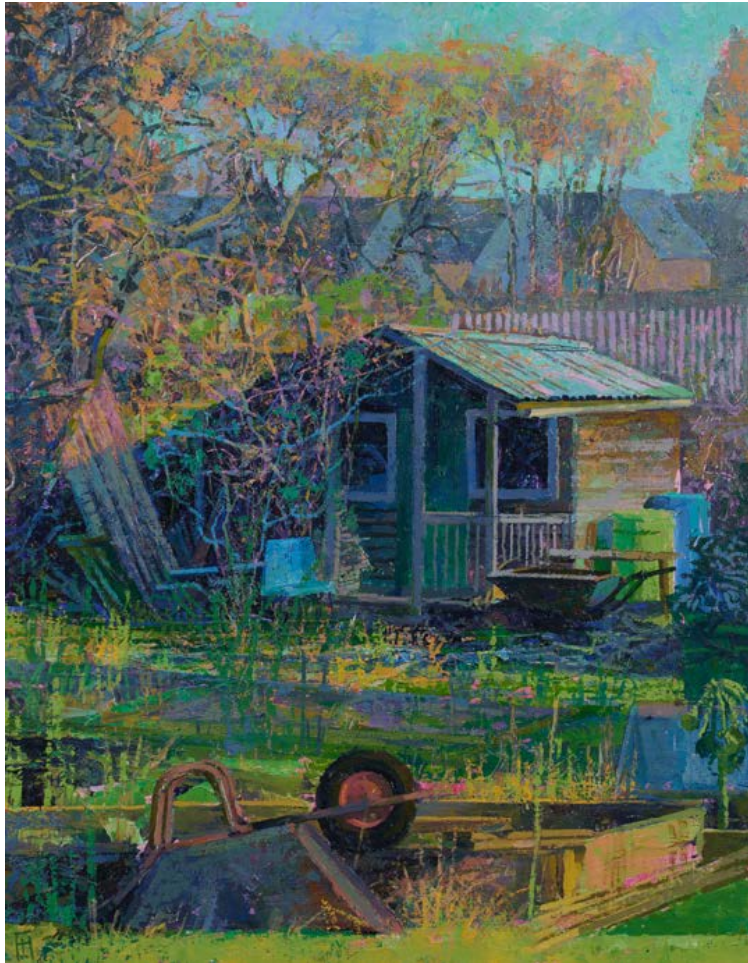
47. Topiary and Pink Hydrangeas at Great Dixter, 2023  
oil on linen. 9 × 8 ins, 23 × 20.5 cms

BALMORAL COTTAGE  
TRAP GROUND ALLOTMENTS  
CRIPLEY MEADOW ALLOTMENTS  
BRAMHAM PARK  
BROUGHTON GRANGE  
SEZINCOTE  
WINCHESTER STREET





50. Balmoral Cottage III, Topiary, 2023  
oil on linen. 9¾ x 7¾ ins, 25 × 20 cms

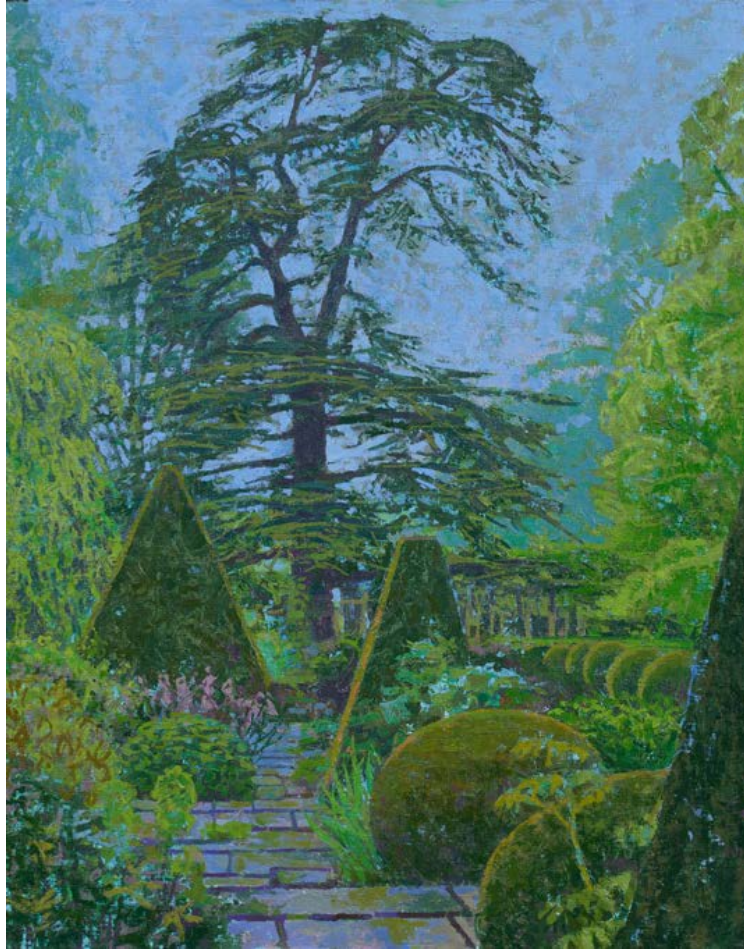


51. Trap Ground Allotments, Upturned Barrow, 2023  
oil on linen. 18 × 14¼ ins, 46 × 36 cms



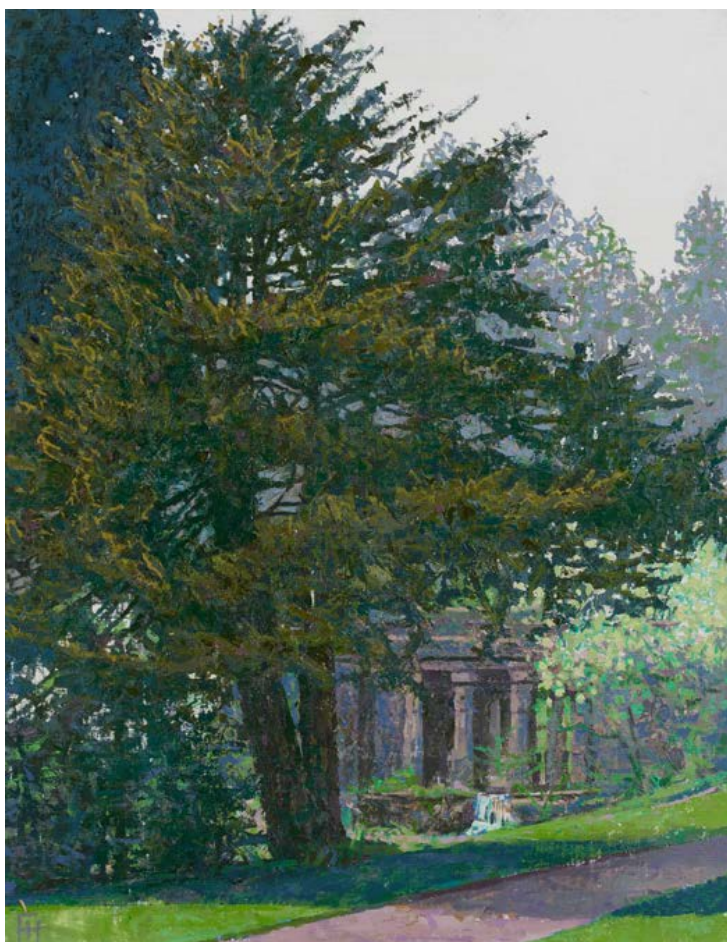
53. Trap Ground Allotments, Temple, 2023  
oil on linen. 12¼ x 8¾ ins, 31 × 22.5 cms





59. Rockcliffe, 2023  
oil on linen, 18 × 14 ¼ ins, 46 × 36 cms





60. Sezincote, Bridge with Yew Tree, 2023  
oil on linen. 18 × 14¼ ins, 46 × 36 cms

LITTLE SPARTA  
BROADWOODSIDE  
DAWYCK  
ARDTORNISH  
ARDUAINE  
DUMFRIES HOUSE  
LOGAN BOTANIC GARDENS  
WORCESTER COLLEGE



63. Grenada Gateway, Little Sparta, 2023  
oil on linen. 24 × 20 ins, 61 × 51 cms



64. Claude Bridge with Rhubarb, Little Sparta, 2023  
oil on linen. 14 × 12 ins, 35.5 × 30.5 cms

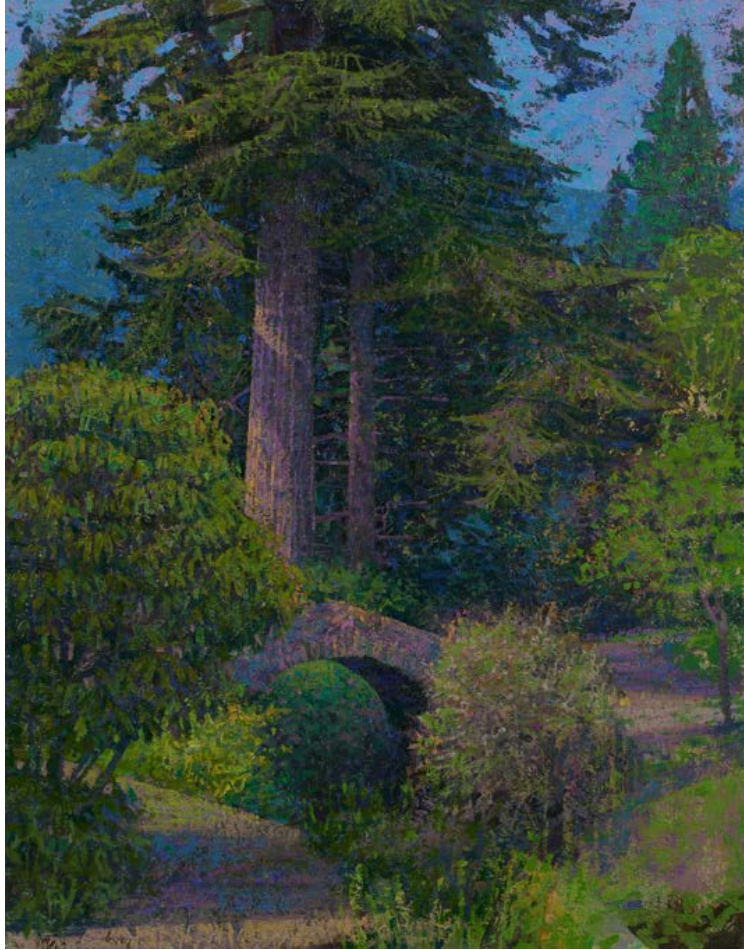




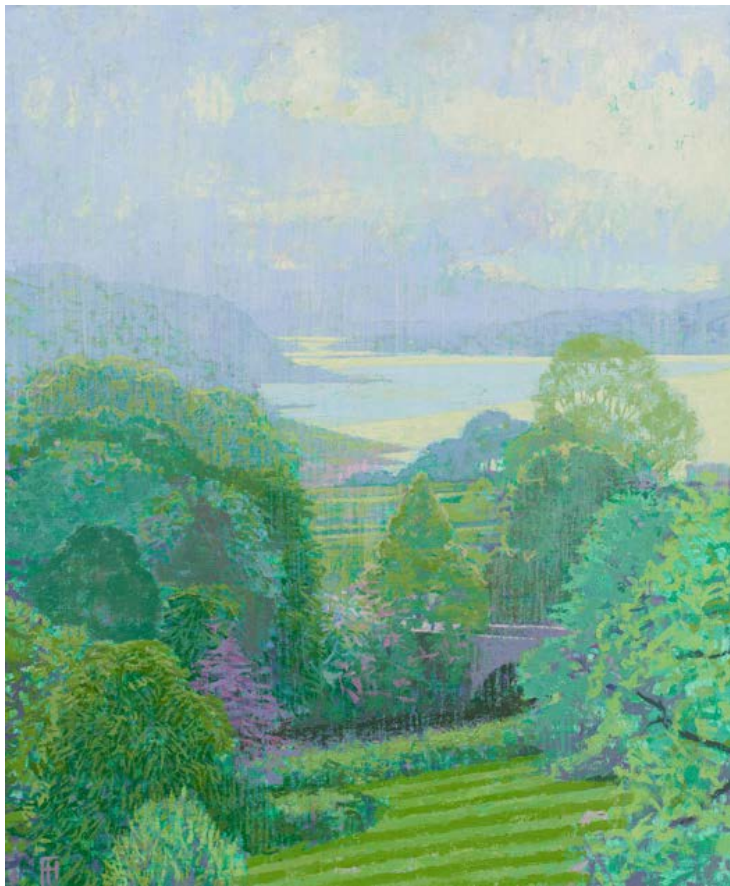
65. Broadwoodside, 2023  
oil on linen. 9  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 7  $\frac{3}{4}$  ins, 25 x 20 cms



66. Greenhouse with Globe Artichokes, 2023  
oil on linen. 15 × 12 ins, 38 × 30.5 cms

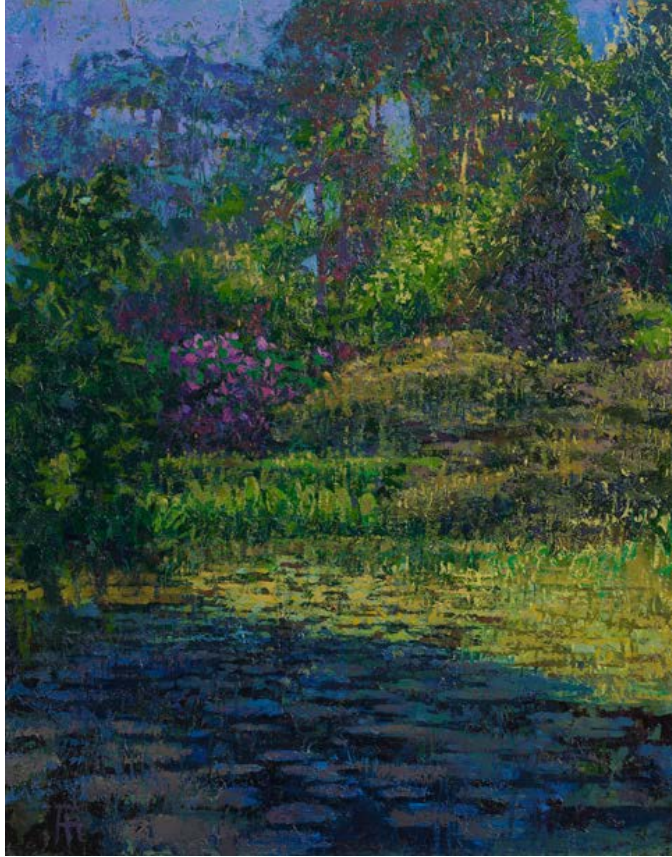


68. Sequoia at Dawyck, 2023  
oil on linen. 18 × 14 ¼ ins, 46 × 36 cms

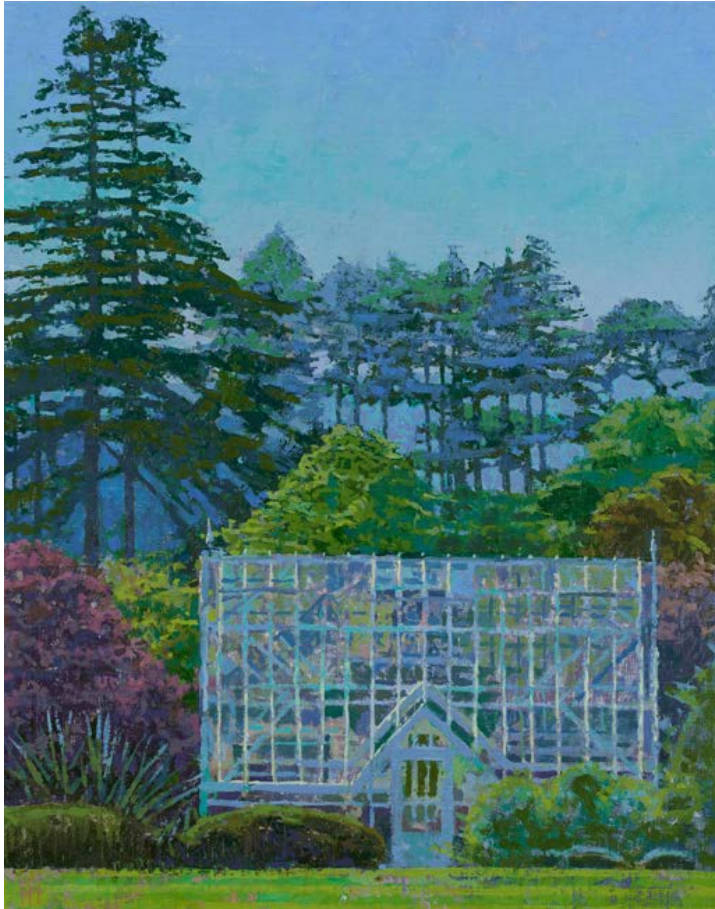


69. Ardtornish, 2023  
oil on linen. 24 × 20 ins, 61 × 51 cms





70. Arduaine, Rhododendron, 2023  
oil on linen. 12  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 10  $\frac{3}{4}$  ins, 32.5 x 27.5 cms



71. Arduaine Greenhouse with Pine Trees, 2023  
oil on linen. 17 × 13 ins, 43 × 33 cms



73. Dumfries House Morning Sun, 2023  
oil on linen. 12 × 15 ins, 30.5 × 38 cms



75. Logan Botanical gardens, 2023  
oil on linen. 24 × 20 ins, 61 × 51 cms



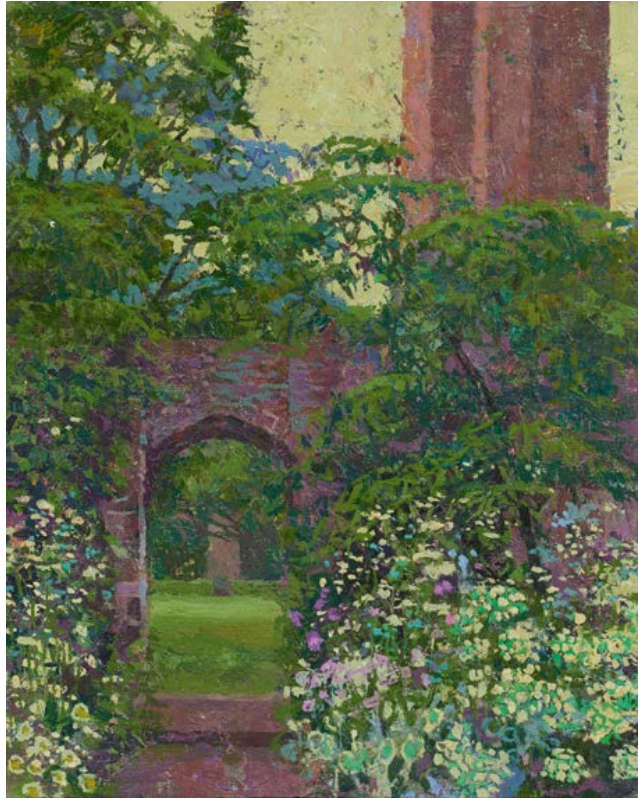
MILVERTON  
SISSINGHURST  
PERCH HILL  
SERGE HILL  
FILKINS



77. Walled Garden, Milverton, 2023  
oil on linen. 10 ¾ x 12 ins, 27.5 × 30.5 cms



78. Kitchen Garden, Milverton, 2023  
oil on linen. 12 × 11 ins, 30.5 × 28 cms



80. Sissinghurst - White Garden Study, 2023  
oil on linen, 9  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 7  $\frac{3}{4}$  ins, 25 x 20 cms





81. The White Garden at Sissinghurst, 2023  
oil on linen, 20 × 24 ins, 51 × 61 cms



83. The White Garden at Sissinghurst , 2023  
oil on linen, 14 ¾ x 10 ins, 37.5 × 25.5 cms



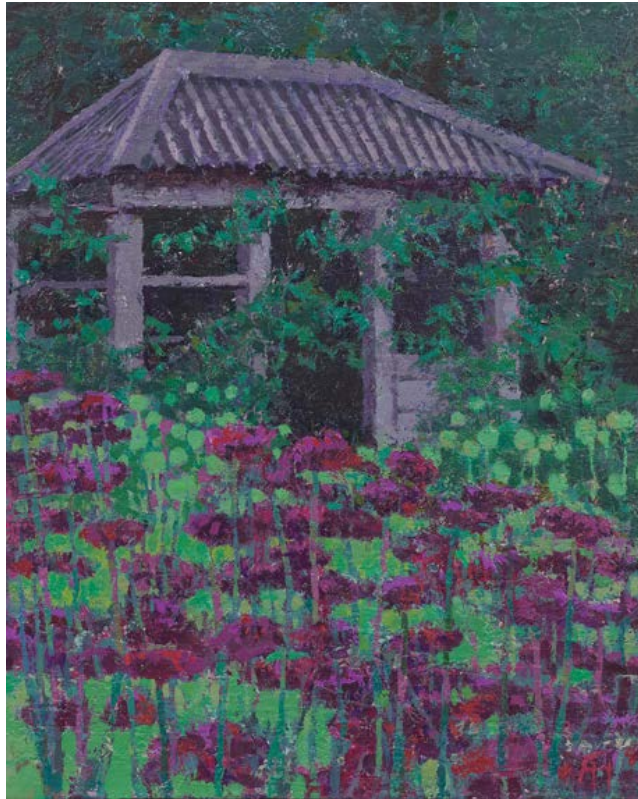
84. A Pot full of Marigolds at Perch Hill , 2023  
oil on linen, 11 ¾ x 6 ins, 30 x 15.5 cms



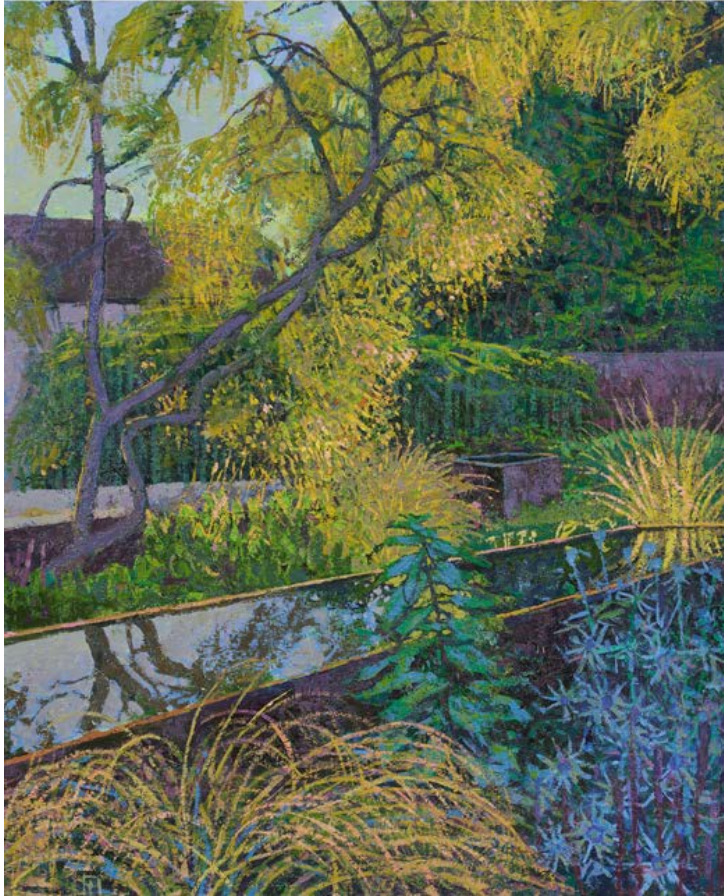


85. Sarah Raven's Cutting Garden, Perch Hill, 2023  
oil on linen, 18 × 14 ¼ ins, 46 × 36 cms

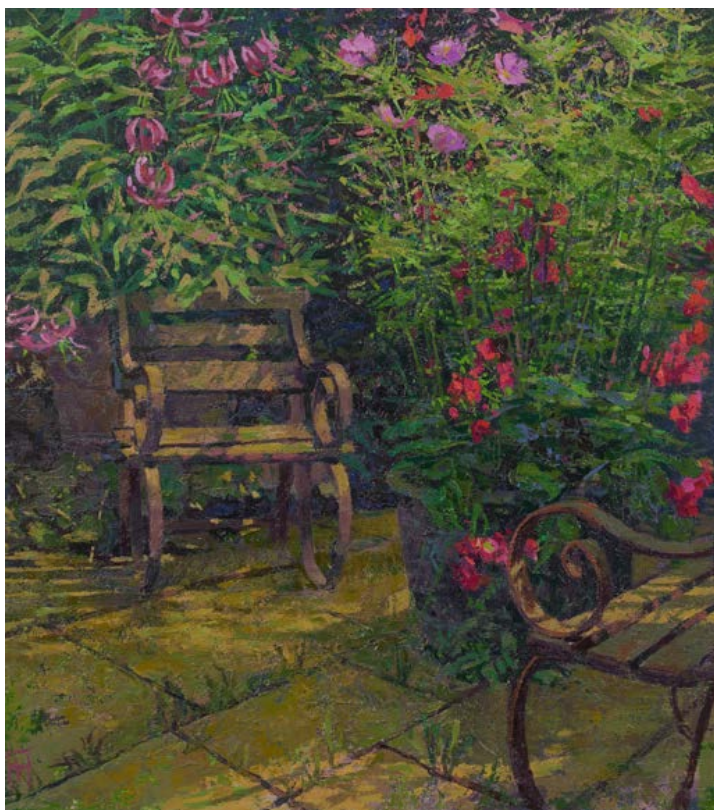




86. Red Cornflowers at Perch Hill at Perch Hill, 2023  
oil on linen, 9  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 7  $\frac{3}{4}$  ins, 25 x 20 cms



89. The Courtyard Garden at Serge Hill, 2023  
oil on linen, 15 × 12 ins, 38 × 30.5 cms



91. Filkins (Arthur Parkinson & James Mackie's Garden), 2023  
oil on linen, 18 ¾ x 13 ½ ins, 47.5 x 34 cms