



Barry McGlashan
Natura Naturata

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2 – 20 November 2020

John Martin Gallery



The Trap (cat. 32)
oil on panel, 40.5 x 51cms, 16 x 20 ins

Aristotle said that ‘art’ was the imitation of nature. This was never more relevant to me than when I was standing in a gallery in frozen Vienna, in the winter of 2018.

The Kunsthistorisches Museum had amassed the vast majority of the extant works of the 16th century Flemish Master, Peter Bruegel the Elder: divine to me in terms of painting. It was a pilgrimage I had to make.

Bruegel was the first artist who really set my mind alight as a small boy. I still recall leafing through an old book on my bedroom floor and seeing those marvelous paintings for the first time: natural wonders on panels of oak, created more than 450 years ago by just one human hand, and yet still filled with vitality, meaning and relevance today.

I made this exhibition of paintings over these past two years. It began as a response to the visual language and myriad pictorial philosophies of Pieter Bruegel the Elder, but that investigation provoked a further visual journey: evolving and finding ever repeating patterns and imitations within a broadening pool of reference and memory.

These works are an exploration of how we have sought to make sense of the world in pictorial form, then and now, and how we find our meaning in it.

Barry McGlashan



Atlas of The Human (cat. 2)
oil on canvas, 96.5 x122cms, 38 x 48 ins

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I suppose in many ways this painting is the starting point on the map of this exhibition, it was the first painting I began when thinking about that journey.

Here, Bruegel is working on his series of paintings of the months, so this places us in Brussels about 1565. On the easel is his *Hunters in The Snow* with its beautiful, endlessly soaring magpie. I included the pair of Mangabey monkeys from his *Two Monkeys* painting which he made in Antwerp. Historically, they would normally represent human folly but for me they say something here of Bruegel's apparent kindness and care towards his fellow beings. There is such a humanity in his work, he paints real people going through everyday triumphs and tragedies. He repeatedly depicts 'the everyman' in his work, and specifically in his drawing of the same name which can be seen on his table along with other references such as the ostrich egg, engraved with the image of Diogenes carrying a lantern in broad daylight, looking for his honest man. These nods to classical antiquity were commonplace at this time - think of Michelangelo and the Laocoön.

Of course the presence of those monkeys, the ostrich egg, the Chinese landscape drawing hanging on the left - and does that vertical stretch of landscape in *Hunters in The Snow* not feel like something from eastern painting - all allude to other aspects of Bruegel's world: the sense of looking outward, exploring, as trade routes would have brought never before seen treasures into Europe.

One of Bruegel's friends was the famous cartographer Abraham Ortelius. I saw many books of his maps when visiting the Museum Plantin-Moretus in Antwerp. He created the first modern atlas, *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* or 'theatre of the orb of the world' and I can't help but think of those beautiful maps - works of art in themselves - when thinking about Bruegel's depiction of space in his paintings. Objects and events are often 'plotted' across the picture surface which seems tilted upwards like a stage, just as those maps would lay out terrain. So poring over a Bruegel painting, with all that inherent meaning, can almost feel like reading rather than looking.

As viewers, this tilting of space places our viewpoint way up above the unfolding events. We are observers over the entire creation for evermore, with a God's eye view...or maybe just the eye of that soaring magpie.



Life of The Artist (cat. 3)
oil on canvas, 122 x 239cms, 48 x 94ins

Life of The Artist (cat. 3)

oil on canvas, 122 x 239cms, 48 x 94ins

At the age of 21, and at the end of my time at art school, I travelled to Florence on a scholarship through the Royal Scottish Academy. This was a three month study period, almost 25 years ago now. Amongst my memories of that time, something which really stands out is Michelangelo's unfinished slave statues, made for the tomb of Pope Julius II and now held at the Galleria dell'Accademia. I was fascinated by those twisting, anguished forms, apparently trying to escape the marble. I included them here as a constant throughout the painting which I intended as a chronology of Michelangelo, the various facts (and fictions?) of his working life, presented throughout the passage of a day.

As the sun rises on the left, we can see his earlier work, the Taddei Tondo (now held at the Royal Academy in London) and some early drawings.

Centrally, I've placed Laocoön and His Sons. In 1506, this sculptural wonder was excavated from a vineyard in Rome after lying in the ground for over a thousand years. This astonishing piece of marble was a huge inspiration to a generation of Renaissance artists, including Michelangelo, who worked on its restoration. It seemed appropriate to give the marble this importance at the centre of Michelangelo's world, and thinking. But on the stonework above it all, he is thinking of the Sistine Chapel commission as he composes his Creation of Adam.

As the sun sets on the right, the wine has been drunk and the grapes are all gone. Amongst his late works, including his final unfinished pietà, I painted a sleeping cupid. I meant it to serve two purposes. Firstly as a symbol of that rest brought by the setting sun, but its placing in the final panel also hopefully suggests something cyclical, balancing the tondo with Virgin and Child on the left. Also, when Michelangelo was 21, before he had made his name as an artist who could command high prices and at a time when ancient classical sculptures (much like the Laocoön) were being unearthed and sold for huge sums, he is said to have struck on an idea the likes of which only a mind with Michelangelo's inventive daring would attempt. He carved a forgery of a sleeping cupid like this one, which, with the help of an unscrupulous dealer, he then artificially aged by burying it in a vineyard.

This 'antiquity' was then helpfully discovered and sold to a Cardinal, making Michelangelo and the dealer a very tidy sum. However, it wasn't long until the Cardinal discovered the ruse, insisting the dealer pay back his share. But Michelangelo was not only allowed to keep his half, he was also invited to Rome by the Cardinal due to his incredible talent as an artist.

As for the cupid, it was returned to the unscrupulous dealer who said he would rather destroy it than return it to the artist. He then sold it, this time keeping all the profits. For the next 200 years it was sold around Europe before eventually disappearing in England in the late 1600s. Or so the story goes.



The Alchemist (cat. 7)
oil on canvas, 100 x 130cms, 39½ x 51¼ ins

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oil on canvas, 100 x 130cms, 39½ x 51¼ ins

The intention of the alchemist doesn't seem so different from that of the painter: attempting to derive value that transcends those raw materials, just as the prospector digs in the dirt.

There are many versions of this subject in the history of painting which I always enjoy, those of the Flemish painter David Teniers particularly. Of course Bruegel got there first. His drawing of 1558 is a treasure trove of meaning and pictorial ingenuity. But no matter which version you look at, the attempts of the hopeful alchemist seem always doomed to failure. There is undoubtedly humour in this, a liberal quantity of schadenfreude, and my painting is no different.

Here he stands, painted into a corner by his own hopeful experiment. The latest concoction is held up, illuminated in the daylight like a lamp, again I'm thinking of Bruegel's reference to Diogenes in *The Everyman* as in my *Atlas of The Human*, with his pointless lantern, a drawing of which can be seen on the wall to the left. Around the alchemist are scattered vessels of all shapes and sizes, instruments of scientific thinking, mystical symbols, clues and fingers all pointing to his ultimate aim.

Making painted compositions like this can be a very complicated business, so I perhaps have a sneaking sympathy with the alchemist's plight.



Rider (cat. 34)
oil on panel, 30.5 x 40.5 cms, 12 x 16ins



Lonesome Pine (cat. 6)
oil, varnish, paper on panel, 30 x 20.5 cms, 11¾ x 8 ins

As Above So Below (cat. 1)
oil on panel, 90 x120 cms, 35½ x 47¼ ins

When I'm standing in a gallery looking at works like those of Hieronymus Bosch or Pieter Bruegel, I can't help but wonder where they were made. We know so little.

Bosch's world seems quite alien to us now. His intention so often seems to be to frighten his viewer. I recently read a wonderful book by Joseph Koerner on the comparison between Bosch and Bruegel. This started me thinking about those two artists: how Bosch almost makes an enemy of his viewer and how Bruegel, using a very similar visual language, creates a more humane, supportive world view.

Having painted my Atlas of The Human (see page 7), showing Bruegel at work, I decided to paint a companion painting, in many ways an opposite. I think of them as upper and lower rooms, Bruegel is Heaven, Bosch is Hell. Were you to walk out of my version of Bruegel's studio, through that red brick doorway to the left, you would arrive at the top of the stairs in my version of Bosch's world. Here, the artist exists in a space of superstition and mysticism. Behind him stands The Haywain, his depiction of Paradise, Earth and Hell, the pictorial form of which he would repeatedly use to seemingly tell us 'it is already too late.'

Unusually for me, I began the painting on a black ground rather than white, so everything was about building the colour and tone up out of that. Our not knowing very much about Bosch felt like an advantage here as it allowed me to create a dark fantasy of the artist, surrounded by visions, cultural notions of Heaven and Hell, and elements from his own paintings and drawings. I've read many theories about him; that he practised alchemy, that he was suffering hallucinations from ingesting ergot fungus, that he was a member of an ancient and obscure sect obsessed with nudity and free love, called 'The Adamites.' I have even read a theory that he witnessed a UFO.

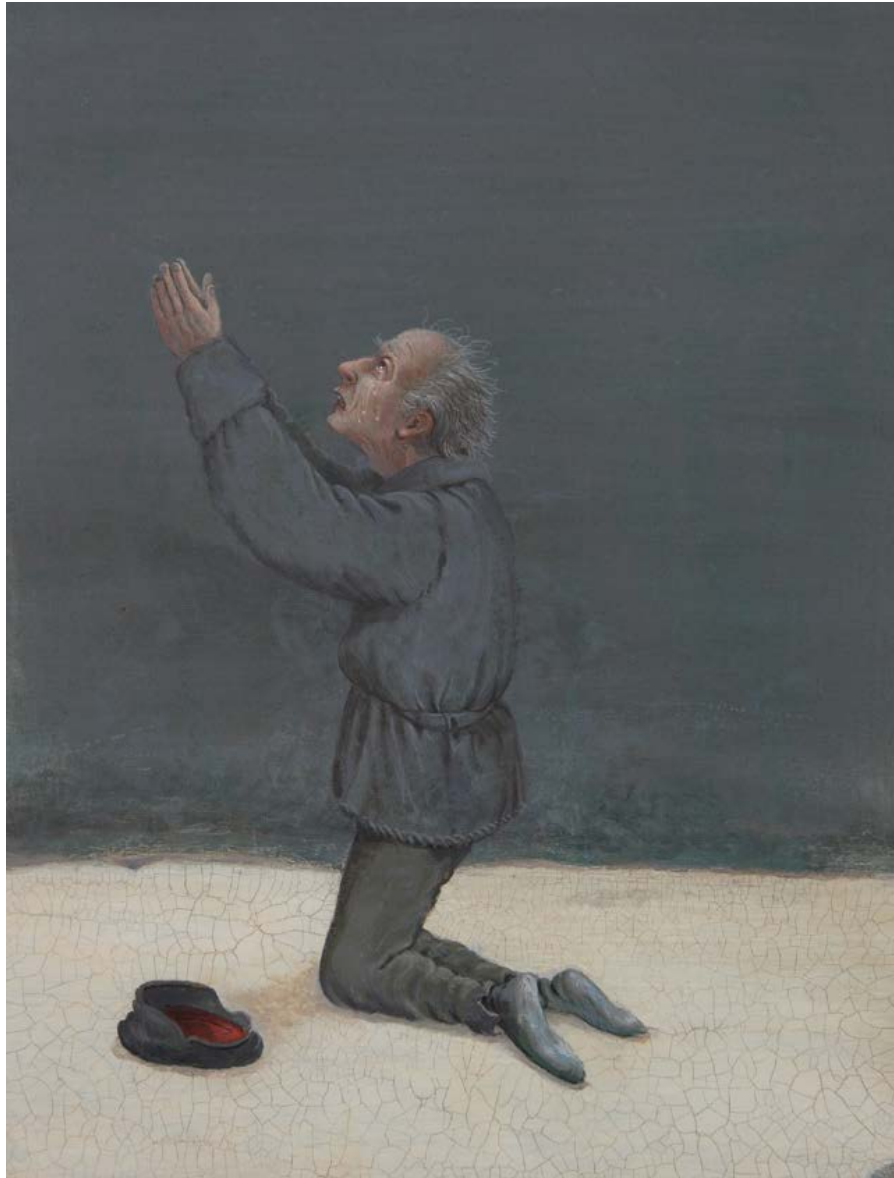
As these suggestions got more outlandish, I came back to the most extraordinary thing of all - the reality is that the paintings were made by an extraordinary mind in an extraordinary time.



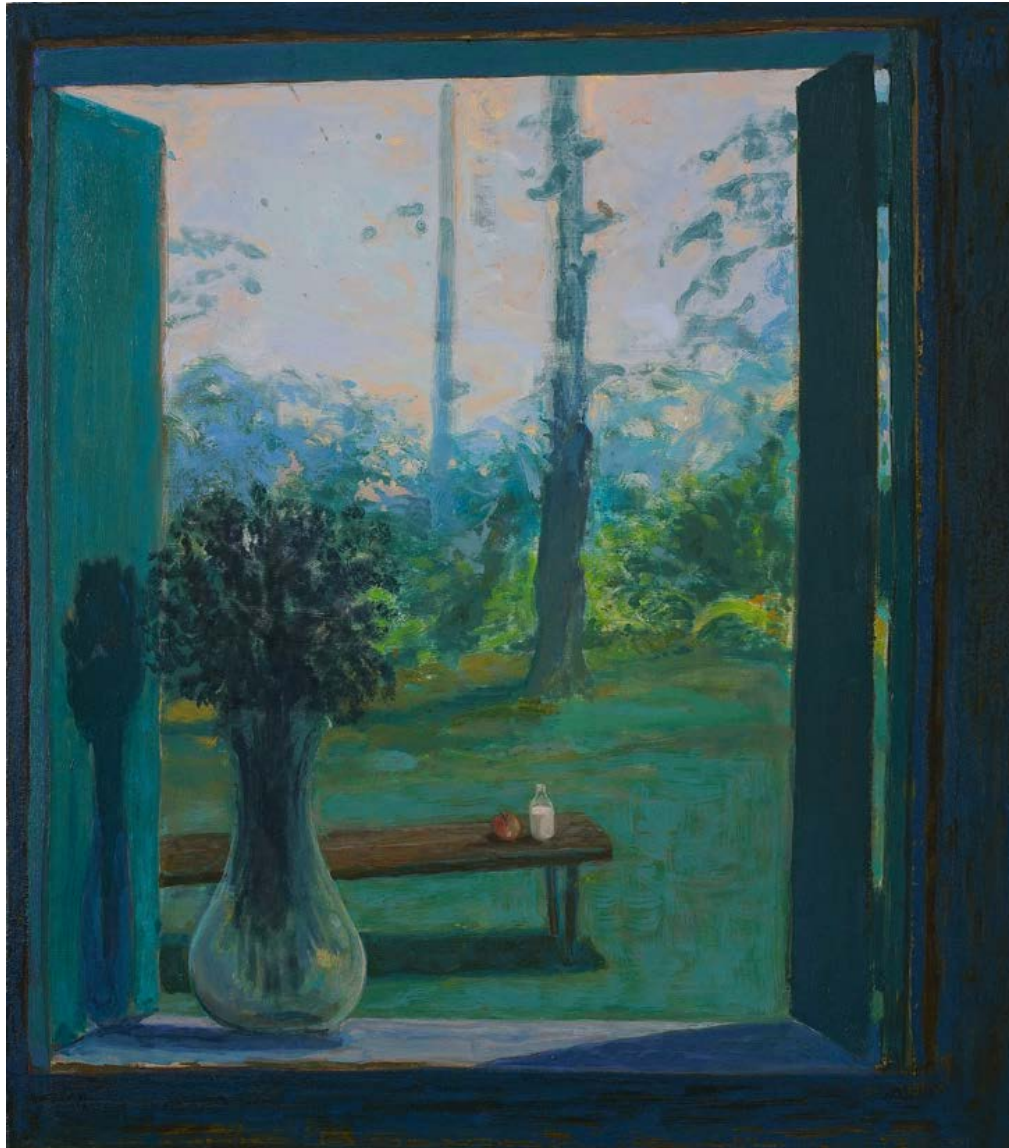
As Above So Below (cat. 1)
oil on panel, 90 x120 cms, 35½ x 47¼ ins



Cold Country (cat. 10)
oil on panel, 30 x 40.5 cms, 11³/₄ x 16ins



Erbarme Dich (cat. 36)
acrylic & oil on panel, 30 x 23 cms, 11¾ x 9 ins



Nostalgia (cat. 12)
oil & oil pastel on panel, 34 x 30.5cms, 13½ x 12 ins



Wintermezzo (cat. 26)
oil & oil pastel on panel, 29 x 42cm, 11½ x 16 ½ ins



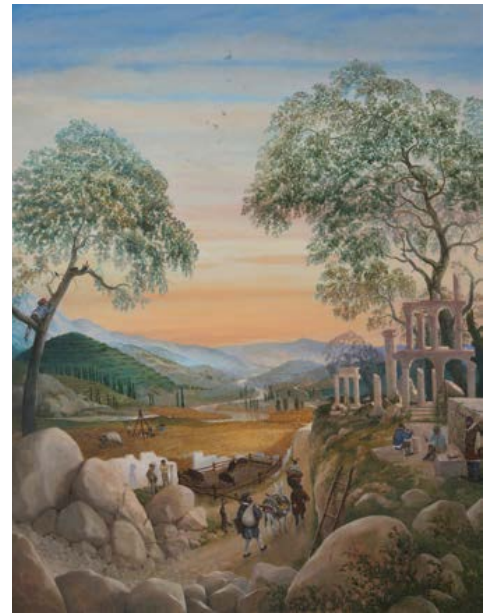
Low and High Countries (cat. 4)
oil on panel (triptych),
90 x 70 / 90 x 90 / 90 x 70 cms,
35½ x 27½ ins / 35½ x 35½ / 35½ x 27½ ins

In his late 20's, Bruegel made a pilgrimage of sorts: travelling from his native Netherlands to spend two years in Rome – much in the same way that artists would later do in the era of The Grand Tour and indeed as many of us still do as art students today.

An early biographer of Bruegel, Karel van Mander, wrote of this journey in 1604:
'On his travels he drew many views from life so that it is said that when he was in the Alps he swallowed all those mountains and rocks which, upon returning home, he spat out again onto canvases and panels, so faithfully was he able, in this respect and others, to follow Nature.'

When in Rome, he stayed with an artist friend, Giulio Clovio, an illuminator and miniaturist. Clovio was greatly influenced by Michelangelo who by this point was well into his seventies and Bruegel must have seen his great works whilst in Rome. But judging by the drawings and prints Bruegel made about his journey, apparently the landscape was a far greater influence on him. Those impressive Alpine views would stay with him in his work for the rest of his life.

Across the three panels of Low and High Countries, I imagined that journey of the young Pieter Bruegel: walking out of his homeland, consuming the majesty of those frozen Alps, and down into the heat of Italy. Faithfully with, and following, nature.



Low and High Countries (cat. 4)
oil on panel (triptych)



Theatrum Mundi (cat. 17)

oil on folding panel,

70.5 x 60 (closed), 70.5 x 120 cms (open),

27³/₄ x 23³/₄ ins, (closed) / (27³/₄ x 47¹/₄ ins, open)

In 1559, Pieter Bruegel painted *The Battle Between Carnival and Lent*, one of my favourite paintings of his, or indeed, of any artist. In it, he shows us a village festival in full swing, it's an astonishing piece of work depicting the contrast between Feast and Lent. So much of what we see in Bruegel's work clearly comes from observation, he must have seen and experienced a lot of what he left behind for us.

When closed, my altarpiece to Bruegel's world shows a very sedate scene, in low light. His attention is drawn by the view through the open window, a few snowflakes drift in on the cold air, hanging there forever. This is an intentional reference to Bruegel's *The Adoration of the Magi in the Snow* which he would paint a few years after *The Battle Between Carnival and Lent*. Here, he effectively freezes one vital moment for us forever by painting falling snow for the first time, magically creating movement and stillness at once in a way which I don't think has ever been bettered.

The outer wings of altarpieces were often presented in this way, in 'grissaille', painted tonally in grey to blend with the architecture of the surrounding building. Then when opened for the congregation, the full splendour is revealed, such as Hieronymus Bosch's globe of the *Creation of The World* which then opens into the *Garden of Earthly Delights*.

On the easel beneath a dust sheet, sits the panel for Bruegel's great *Battle*, still at the preparatory drawing stage. On the walls around the studio are works on paper, character studies collected for the task Bruegel has set himself, perhaps observed from the view we are afforded when those windows are opened onto a snowy town square.

And here all life is happening at once, frozen and framed on the stage of this theatre of the world.



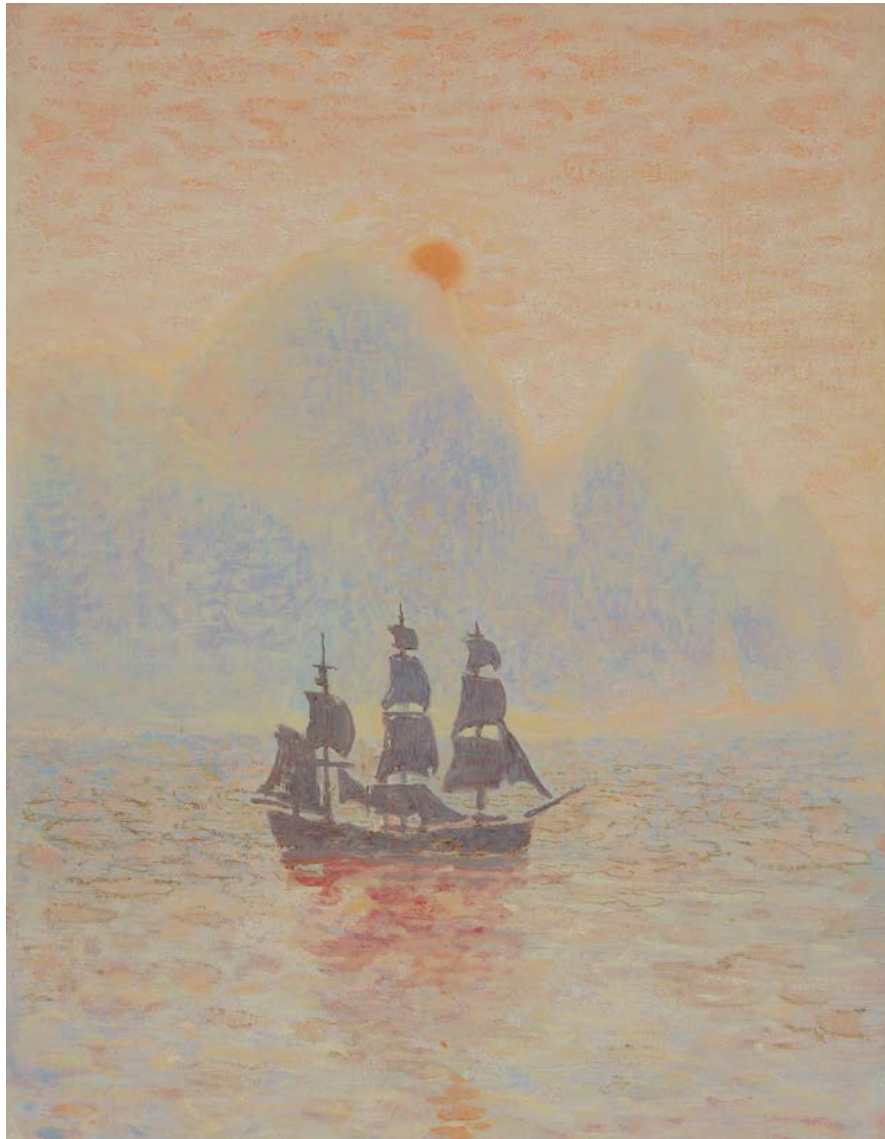
Theatrum Mundi ABOVE panels open
oil on folding panel, 70.5 x 120 cms (open), 27¾ x 47¼ ins, (open)



Theatrum Mundi (ABOVE) panels closed
oil on folding panel, 70.5 x 60 cms, 27³/₄ x 23³/₄ ins



The Old Man and the Sea (cat. 18)
oil on canvas, 24.5 x 28 cms, 9½ x 11 ins



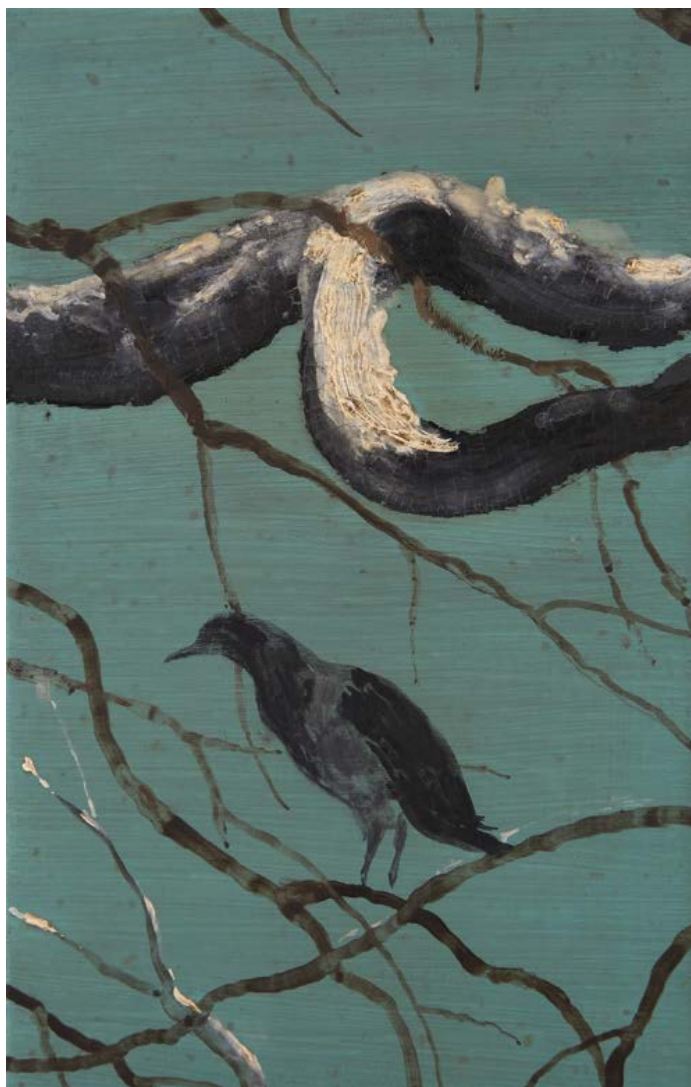
Southern Reach (cat. 11)
oil on canvas, 30 x 23.5cms, 11½ x 9¼ ins



The Planthunter (cat.14)
oil on panel, 28 x 33cms, 11 x 13 ins



Seeds from a Winter Garden (cat.41)
oil on canvas, 45 x 41cms, 17³/₄ x 16¹/₄ ins



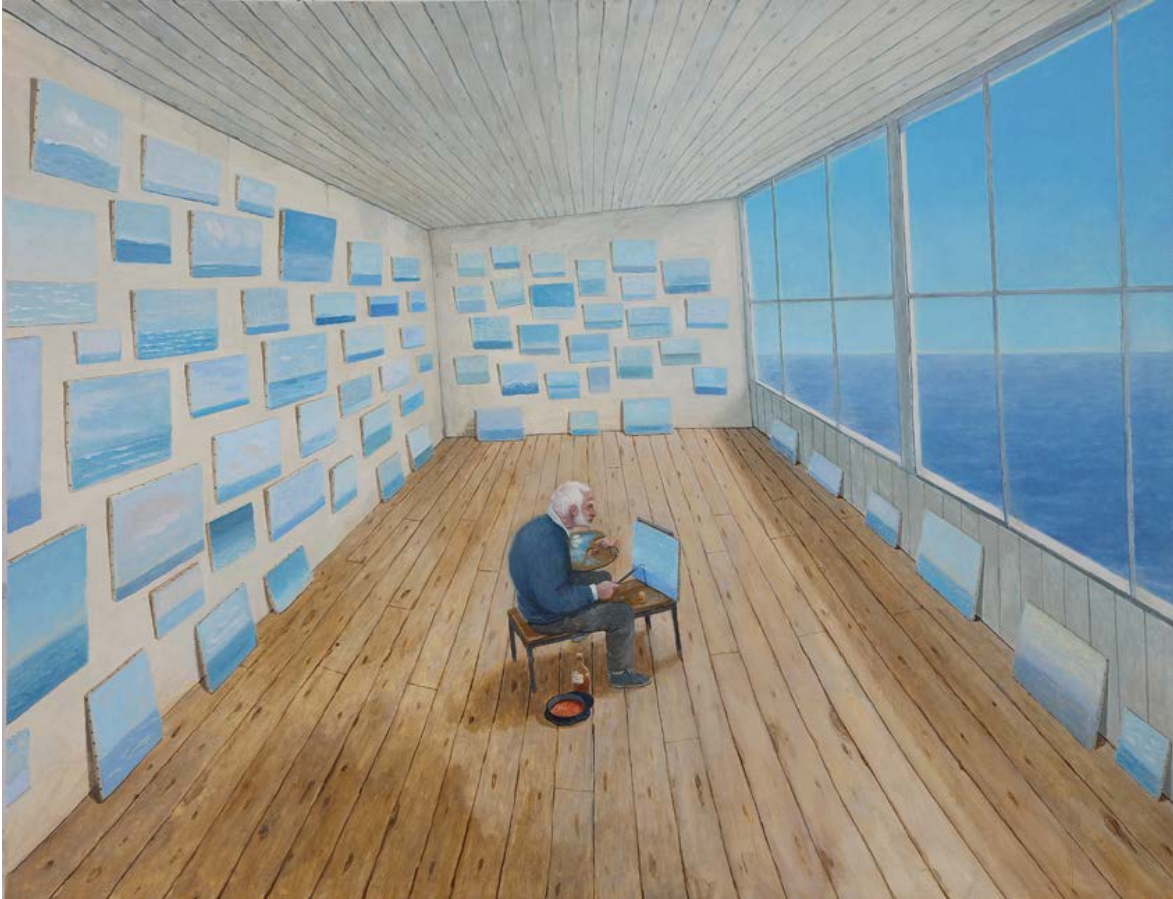
Winter Moment (After Bruegel) (cat. 27)
acrylic and oil on panel, 21 x 13.5 cms, 8¼ x 5¼ ins



Painter's Copy (Bruegel) (cat. 45) oil
on canvas, 91 x 71 cms, 36 x 28 ins



Der Abschied (cat. 39)
oil on panel, 30 x 40.5 cms, 11¾ x 16 ins



The Sea Inside (cat. 31)
oil on panel, 70.5 x 91cms, 27³/₄ x 35³/₄ ins



Natura Morta (cat. 40)
oil on panel, 70.5 x 91cms, 27³/₄ x 36 ins



ABOVE Moon, Tree, Lake (cat. 16)
oil on panel, 24.5 x 28.5 cms, 9³/₄ x 11¹/₄ ins



Longing (cat. 33)
oil on paper, 18 x18 cms, 7 x 7 ins



Stranger (cat. 15)
oil on canvas, 30.5 x 23.5 cms, 12 x 9¼ ins



Flight (cat.13)
oil & varnish on panel, 30.5 x 23 cms, 12 x 9 ins



The Owls (cat. 30)
oil on panel, 30 x 19.5 cms, 11³/₄ x 7³/₄ ins

Complete Catalogue of Paintings

1. As Above, So Below, oil on panel, 90 x 120 cms, 35½ x 47¼ ins
(see pages 16-17)
2. Atlas of The Human, oil on canvas, 96.5 x 122cms, 38 x 48 ins
(see pages 6-7)
3. Life of The Artist, oil on canvas, 122 x 239 cms, 48 x 94 ins
(see pages 8-11)
4. Low and High Countries,
oil on panel (triptych), 90 x 70 / 90 x 90 / 90x70 cms, 35½ x 27½ ins / 35½ x 35½ / 35½ x 27½ ins
(see pages 22-25)
5. Pale Mountain, oil, varnish & paper on panel, 30 x17cms, 11¾ x 6 ¾ins
This image came from another. I had been working on the painting Night on The Mountain, also part of this exhibition, and the surface of that had become overladen with paint. I used this sheet of paper to lift some paint from the surface and the line of this pale mountain was the result, so through a process of sealing and layering I made a second painting. A mirror opposite of that dark mountain.
6. Lonesome Pine, oil, varnish & paper on panel, 30 x 20.5cms, 11¾ x 8ins
This mountain view - perhaps seen as though through a John Ford doorway in an old western - felt to me like a story waiting to begin. It went through several iterations and eventually I found that lonesome pine beginning to appear through the painting process and so I just let it grow there, it became the unexpected hero of the story.
7. The Alchemist, oil on canvas, 100 x130cms, 39½ x 51¼ ins
(see pages 12-13)
8. Leech Gatherer , oil on panel, 23.5 x 20.5cms, 9¼ x 8 ins
I was thinking about the poem Resolution and Independence by Wordsworth in which he recounts his meeting with a lowly leech gatherer whilst out walking. The gloomy poet is buoyed up and renewed by the attitude of the leech gatherer who has long accepted his unfortunate position in life: old and poor, but with a cheerful disposition.
9. The Sun in a Mist, oil on panel, 23 x 31cms, 9 x12¼ ins
When I was very young, there was a painting hanging at the bottom of the stairs in our house of a large wave crashing onto the shore with the sun setting behind it. I can still see it now, the glowing blue of the wave, crowned by a white curl of surf, illuminated by the light from behind. I would sit at the bottom of the stairs and look into it, trying to understand how the trick was done. I realise I've painted that, or a version of that, many times: playing with what is right and what is wrong, pictorially. This was painted in the middle of our recent claustrophobic lockdown Summer, when I was longing to see a wave.
10. Cold Country, oil on panel, 30 x 40.5cms, 11¾ x 16ins
After years of looking at his work, those rural villages seen in Bruegel's paintings now feel quite familiar to me, like a memory of somewhere visited in childhood. Despite the seeming warmth of Bruegel's created world, in reality it must have been a terribly difficult time to be alive. In my Cold Country, that idealism of village life is quietly marred by a similar reality.
11. Southern Reach, oil on canvas, 30 x 23.5cms, 11¾ x 9¼ ins
"We must always remember with gratitude and admiration the first sailors who steered their vessels through storms and mists, and increased our knowledge of the lands of ice in the South." - Roald Amundsen
12. Nostalgia, oil & oil pastel on panel, 34 x 30.5cms, 13½ x12 ins
I realised quite late that nostalgia was playing a big part in this exhibition. I suppose that may come from thinking so much about the work of Pieter Bruegel, where this exhibition began. I've heard it said by historians that Bruegel's work is itself very nostalgic, those rural village scenes he so often depicts are probably those of his parents or even grandparents. One of my favourite films is Mirror by Andrei Tarkovsky, itself a study of nostalgia and memory, I

reference it more than once in this exhibition. Tarkovsky also references Bruegel in his films. There are sequences where the camera drifts around his childhood home somewhere in the old countryside of his native Russia. The light is descending to dusk, very quiet, very still. Out through a window and into a lush blue green wood, there is a soft repeating birdcall. I think maybe a wood pigeon or collared dove? I remember that birdcall as a child, it's still one of my favourite sounds and this is one of my favourite sequences in film. We share so many things despite our differences. There's a language which we are all familiar with, it allows for short cuts. Film is very good at that, painting is too.

13. Flight, oil & varnish on panel, 30.5 x 23 cms, 12 x 9 ins
This is really a painting about pictorial references, drawn from my memory of a scene in Tarkovsky's film, Mirror. In this sequence, Tarkovsky gives us his version of Bruegel's painting, Hunters in The Snow. A child struggles up the snow covered hill and looks back over the valley as though across time, just as the Bruegel's hunters did. The landscape stretches out like a map unfolded, the concept of 'weltlandschaft' or 'world landscape' which was so often deployed by the Flemish Master. The first time I saw it in the film I hadn't been expecting this and found it quite startling. Here I also included a version of Bruegel's soaring magpie, it flies through my paintings from time to time.
14. The Planthunter, oil on panel, 28 x 33cms, 11 x 13 ins
I've always been fascinated by travellers, and what motivates them - that endless pursuit of something. It's a very romantic notion. My wife was a gardener in her earlier life so I'm very lucky to have a nice garden, and of course shelves of books on the history of that subject. They are full of images of intense looking bearded men standing amongst jungles of plants and flowers. Beautifully aged watercolours, exquisite engravings and primitive photographs from an earlier time and place. My painting is responding just as much to the object of those images, as to the subject itself.
15. Stranger, oil on canvas, 30.5 x 23.5 cms, 12 x 9¼ ins
This painting went through many changes but I was in no hurry. The stage was set but there were no players. I had a small painting on paper of a figure, actually a silhouette of Henry Fonda from John Ford's early western 'My Darling Clementine.' Somehow that unknowable shape, that stranger, seemed to fit this painting which had been so elusive for so long.
16. Moon, Tree, Lake, oil on panel, 24.5 x 28.5 cms, 9¾ x 11¼ ins
I enjoyed the reduced nature of this painting: how little information does the image need to still succeed? It's a hard thing to get right but that pictorial purity through reduction interests me more and more.
17. Theatrum Mundi
oil on folding panel, 70.5 x 60 (closed), 70.5 x 120 cms (open), (27¾ x 23¾ ins, closed) / (27¾ x 47¼ ins, open)
(see pages 26-29)
18. The Old Man and The Sea, oil on canvas, 24.5 x 28cms, 9¾ x 11 ins
The old sailor looking to sea. I wonder where he is in his thoughts, lost in some private place far away.
19. Horse on the Hill (A Hill in England), oil on panel, 30 x 45cms, 11¾ x 17¾ ins
I found the place of this painting long before I found it's subject. Something I'll do in the studio is lay down paint on a panel and move it around using several methods until things begin to suggest themselves out of that surface. The 'landscape' element of what I was doing began to make sense to me but when I tried to occupy it with a subject nothing felt right. At the same time I was listening to a lecture by one of my favourite artists of today, the Danish artist Tal R, and he was speaking about how he is often drawn to images he shouldn't be, as a challenge, mainly for reasons of taste or pictorial prejudice. One of the images he listed was a horse on the horizon: it is just too 'Hollywood' or idealistic. I knew exactly what he was getting at, I have a list of my own. But I also had an image of a chalk horse which I'd been meaning to use for a while but couldn't find a home for. With the challenge to make a painting of a horse on a horizon laid down, these things all coalesced and something here worked for me. I later discovered the horse was the Osmington White Horse in Dorset, its rider is apparently King George III. So then, having found the subject, I found the place again: a hill in England.
20. Rain, oil on panel, 30 x 40.5 cms, 11¾ x 16 ins
I recently watched the very beautiful film Sátántangó by the Hungarian director Béla Tarr. It seems to be raining continuously throughout the film, and at 7½ hours, it's a very long film. Thankfully I always enjoy the rain and I wanted to make a painting about that. There's a long scene in it which follows a girl walking along a pathway in the rain and it almost becomes a meditative thing. In my painting, I wanted to capture that indistinct moment. Something small in nature: no great event, but also somehow vital.

21. Painter by The Sea, oil on panel, 30 x 40.5 cms, 11¾ x 16 ins
Here I was thinking about Casper David Friedrich's great painting The Monk by The Sea. His tiny figure of a monk stands before the broad, flat dark expanse: dwarfed by the vastness of nature. It's a landscape of course but it feels like a brick wall, there is not much hope in it. My painter is viewing a similar scene but there is more for him to play with as those little puffs of smoke from his contemplative cigarette become like thought clouds in the sky. I hope everyone will know this feeling just as a painter by the sea might: 'there's a meaning out there in nature, can I find it?'
22. Smoker, oil on canvas, 60 x 45cms, 23½ x 17¾ ins
I've never smoked but I have a sort of nostalgia for that time when it was everywhere. I remember being a child in the seventies, sitting in a choking fog on the top floor of the bus. Then at school in the eighties, where my art teacher (Mr Constable, great name for an art teacher) seemed to permanently have a cigarette dangling from his finger...and then later in life at art college, when a night in the pub surrounded by chain smokers would mean you had to wash everything you'd been wearing. Of course we're better off without it. But a small part of me still hankers for that time... The great Philip Guston painted smoking, and smokers, very well. I have him in mind here. The drawing in...the glow...the tick of the watch.
23. A Weary God, oil on panel, 20 x 26 cms, 8 x 10¼ ins
I was thinking of Casper David Friedrich and his famous painting of the Wanderer Over a Sea of Fog. He would often paint his figures this way, seen from behind, 'rückenfigur.' They look out over immense landscapes, trying to find some meaning in it all. The figure in my painting felt like something mythical to me, a modern day Greek Titan perhaps, wondering what it was he had meant when he began.
24. Antwerp, oil on canvas over panel, 30.5 x 30.5 cms, 12 x 12 ins
There is a very strange painting by Pieter Bruegel which I saw for the first time recently, Two Monkeys from 1562. It's a small painting, only about 20cm square but so enigmatic. In it, two little Mangabey monkeys sit chained in a window recess next to some broken walnut shell, overlooking Antwerp. I have read many versions of what this painting may mean but I very much appreciated Manfred Sellink's take on Two Monkeys in his excellent monograph on Bruegel; *'They are simply what they are: two exotic creatures, extremely rare in Antwerp at the time, the hapless trophies of a long voyage abroad, portrayed against the background of Antwerp harbour.'*
I made this painting as a response, the monkeys have long fled into my Atlas of The Human (see cat. 2, pages 6-7), but here we are left with a sort of meditation on the unknown. I think not knowing can be useful, it can give us a window to somewhere else.
25. The Glassblower, oil & varnish on panel, 18 x 13cm, 7 x 5 ins
I worked this surface over many times: polishing and sanding, letting the central figure come and go repeatedly, experimenting with various mediums and levels of definition, hotter...then colder...until I arrived at this conclusion. I enjoyed the pitted, glassy finish which I was left with and it occurred to me the subject was perhaps influencing my method.
26. Wintermezzo, oil & oil pastel on panel, 29 x 42cm, 11½ x 16 ½ ins
The cycling figure in this painting came to me very late. Originally it was a migrating group of figures, like a little flock of birds. Then it was an overladen sledge being pulled by a lone traveller - but no, that was too static. There was something I wanted to capture about the feeling of movement from here to there. The title Wintermezzo is of course a play on the term 'intermezzo' meaning something short and nimble which takes place between one thing and another, either in music or dramatically. So I found my nimble cyclist, but I then wasn't too keen on the solidness of the figure in its pale surroundings which I'd worked so hard to compose. Then came those pale areas you can see, breaking up the flat form, perhaps suggesting clinging snow, happening at the very last minute as Stuart the photographer was parking his car, just before the final photograph was taken.
27. Winter Moment (after Bruegel), acrylic & oil on panel, 21 x 13.5 cms, 8¼ x 5¼ ins
In the winter of 2018 I was standing in front of Bruegel's Hunters in The Snow in Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum for the first time, after years of distant admiration. I found over and over again that my eye was drawn to the birds up in those black branches of the trees, overlooking everything. A thick lip of paint on the surface bounced light and suddenly I was seeing the 'picture' as it truly was: a 450 year old object in the real world, today. No longer just printed in a book, but right in front of me, within painting distance. I wanted to make something that felt like that moment of observation, the way I was suddenly aware of the hand of the Flemish Master.
28. The Bell, oil on panel, 30.5 x 25.5 cms, 12 x 10 ins
I found the surface of the panel of wood that this is painted on to be very beautiful so I wanted to leave it exposed as much as possible, using only a thin wash of pigment to suggest a distance. There is a quality of age to a surface like this which you just can't replicate, only time can make it. The fisherman rings a bell to call a boat that will never arrive.
29. Northern Romantic, oil & oil pastel on paper, 57 x 76 cms, 22½ x 30 ins
Until quite recently, there had always been myths and theories of what may lie in the distant lands beyond our maps - I suppose

that lure of what is on the other side of the mountain has always been with us. Here, somewhere in the North, the idea of day and night becomes muddled as my eternal traveller drifts into the shifting light and dark of a hyperborean landscape.

30. The Owls, oil on panel, 30 x 19.5 cms, 11¾ x 7¾ ins
From a very early memory of my Mother pointing down our garden and saying 'Look, see it? On the flagpole.'
For some unknown reason we had a flag pole at the bottom of our garden. It was there when my parents moved in and, such is the way, I suppose they just never got around to removing it. It was quite normal to me, for a while it seemed reasonable to assume everybody had one. Everything was in half light, either very early or very late. She was pointing, I was looking - and there, with all of us staring intently at each other; the first time I ever saw an owl.
31. The Sea Inside, oil on panel, 70.5 x 91cms, 27¾ x 35¾ ins
I think anyone who spends any length of time in nature gets so they have a hunger for it. It doesn't matter if it's the garden, the mountains, or the sea. It's a similar thing with painting I find. If too much time passes out of the studio then I start to get anxious, I have to get back.
32. The Trap, oil on panel, 40.5 x 51cms, 16 x 20 ins
Pieter Brueghel the Younger made a good living copying the works of his late father. It seems he particularly liked to copy 'Winter Landscape with skaters and bird trap' from 1565. His workshop is thought to have made 45 versions, but over 125 are known to exist. Success can be a very dangerous thing to the creativity of an artist. It seemed quite apt to me that this was a painting of a trap.
33. Longing, oil on paper, 18 x 18 cms, 7 x 7 ins
Just as I used Henry Fonda from John Ford's My Darling Clementine for my painting Stranger (cat. 15), so I made this painting of the eponymous Clementine. The film ends in classic western fashion as Henry Fonda says from atop his horse: "Ma'am, I sure like that name. Clementine." He rides off into the dust of a black and white Monument Valley, as Clementine stands there on the hilltop. I watch westerns all the time and there's a certain sadness only they seem to get right. A sort of bittersweet something, like the end of a dream. Despite the grainy black and white of that scene, the memories of my time in Monument Valley made the colour quite vivid. I long to return there again someday.
34. Rider, oil on panel, 30.5 x 40.5 cms, 12 x 16ins
As a huge fan of the western genre, I've always been interested in the idea of the prospector. There's something about it for me that is similar to painting, something just waiting there to be uncovered. It reminds me of what Michelangelo said about his sculptures being inside the block of marble and he only has to set them free. I have a book of old photographs about the Klondike gold rush which occurred at the end of the 19th century, this painting could almost be from that book. One of the great prospecting stories is The Treasure of The Sierra Madre, by the mysterious novelist, B. Traven. It opens with this:
"The treasure which you think not worth taking trouble and pains to find, this one alone is the real treasure you are longing for all your life. The glittering treasure you are hunting for day and night lies buried on the other side of that hill yonder."
35. All in a Hot and Copper Sky, oil on paper, 23 x 15.5 cms, 9 x 6 ins
Taking its title from Coleridge's Rime of the Ancient Mariner, this work on paper spent a long time languishing in the doldrums of my plan chest drawer. But then those final marks came suddenly and spiritedly, like the rising breeze in that poem, and it seemed that 'swiftly, swiftly flew the ship.'
36. Erbarne Dich, acrylic & oil on panel, 30 x 23 cms, 11¾ x 9 ins
Time can create a very beautiful effect on old paintings; it can add something which the painter didn't anticipate. I've often noticed those exquisite lines of craquelure, particularly across white areas for some reason: an effect of drying on the medium of pigments, which I have replicated here, in artificial form. My praying man kneels, begging for mercy from an unseen power which may as well be time itself. (The title comes from the famous aria by J. S. Bach)
37. Limewash, oil on panel, 46 x 38 cms, 18 x 15 ins
It was very therapeutic creating this surface - repeatedly adding paint, removing paint, over and over - until the wall was built. I like the look of this kind of thing in the natural world: peeling paint and decay. A beauty of impermanence, what the Japanese would call 'wabi-sabi.' It was almost a shame to paint someone painting over it.
38. Man O' War (after Frans Huys), oil on canvas over panel, 30.5 x 30.5cms, 12 x 12 ins
This painting was inspired by a series of prints of sailing ships by the printmaker (and Bruegel collaborator) Frans Huys. These wondrous historical records are more like beautiful portraits than anything else: classifying various forms of vessel

with great accuracy. As prints, they were obviously intended for mass circulation and their publisher, Hieronymus Cock must have done very well out of them at a time when sea travel was vital to the way of life. I couldn't resist the subversion of turning one back into a unique painting.

39. Der Abschied, oil on panel, 30 x 40.5cms, 11¾ x 16ins
A life at sea would mean many farewells. This little piece of romantic opera takes its title from Gustav Mahler, who often keeps me company in the studio.
40. Natura Morta, oil on panel, 70.5 x 91cms, 27¾ x 36 ins
Due to my wife's work as an art historian, I often find myself in Oxford at the very beginning of the new year with not much on my plate, so it has become a welcome habit to spend a lot of time at the Ashmolean Museum. I think of it as my 'secret artist's residency'. There is a fairly modest gallery about half way through, an enclosed space with no windows. Instead, all four walls are covered with over ninety still-lives of flowers: some fresh, some wilting, peeling fruit, hunted game, plates of shellfish; a plethora of memento mori and vanitas, all created in the 17th-century by Dutch and Flemish artists. I find the singular intent of this display very powerful and I think it's one of my favourite rooms in a gallery, anywhere. As a subject I found it irresistible, so I made this version of the space, this room of life and death.
41. Seeds from a Winter Garden, oil on canvas, 45 x 41cms, 17¾ x 16¼ ins
This is the last painting I made for this exhibition. When the Summer is over and Autumn arrives, then into Winter, I always enjoy the way the underlying structure of the garden is slowly revealed. The plants seem done, finished - but of course not, they're just sleeping. Sometimes we'll collect seeds for the next year, a new garden out of the old, the endless cycle. I often feel that way about endings in the studio: what has passed means a new start and will feed the next season: nature natured.
42. Wake, oil on paper, 31 x 23cms, 12¼ x 9 ins
This painting happened very quickly, just a note for something else I was thinking of. As a painter, you can find yourself creating paperwork in preparation for something larger or more finished, so you leave this trail of rough working behind which may be repurposed or just as likely, slipped into a drawer and forgotten. But somehow this modest painting on paper kept coming back to me as something pure, I felt that it did everything it needed to.
43. Squall, oil on panel, 24 x 28.5 cms, 9½ x 11¼ ins
How to paint the energy of a storm at sea? I enjoyed the technical aspects of this: created with a certain mix between pigment and white spirit, also using pure turpentine which makes the white spirit disperse across the surface, taking that pigment with it in a tempestuous swirl.
44. Night on The Mountain, oil on panel, 26 x 17.5 cm, 10¼ x 7 ins
A painting made early on in the work for this exhibition, thinking about the journey over the mountain to come. How terrible it may seem in a storm at night: like some overblown Germanic opera. I loved the final surface of this painting: smooth like dark glass.
45. Painter's Copy (Bruegel), oil on canvas. 91 x 71 cms, 36 x 28 ins
I made this painting about one of those relics which we painters keep with us wherever we work. It's always there somewhere, pinned up on the studio wall. A print of a painting, an object repeated, I've had it for as long as I can remember. On this trompe-l'oeil surface are all the traces of past working, paint spattered here and there, with its tears and creases, it becomes like a record of time spent.
Of course that notion of recording the past is exactly what Bruegel was doing in his painting, this being the backdrop (and ultimate destination) of his Hunters in the Snow. Here the way ahead is plotted out, his magpie leads us towards those vertiginous peaks which climb like a beautiful piece of Chinese landscape painting, totally out of place for his native Netherlands but rather a memory of his journey across the Alps on his way to Rome many years before.
I remember the surface of the actual painting as being one of the most beautiful things I've ever seen in a gallery: like a piece of polished marble. I wanted to make this painting, an object in homage to that mountain far away which I have carried with me all these years.



Horse on the Hill (A Hill in England) (cat. 19)
oil on panel, 30 x 45cms, 11³/₄ x 17³/₄ ins



Painter by The Sea, (cat. 21)
oil on panel, 30 x 40.5 cms, 11¾ x 16 ins

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