

— Francis Hamel

Rachel's Flowers, 2008-13

7 - 21 March 2014



John Martin Chelsea

Rachel's Flowers.

Ever since we first met, Rachel's flowers have been central to our life at home. The flowers she picks from our garden and the combinations of colours that she puts together always make me look twice and when she leaves the house to go to work, it has become something of a habit to take them to my studio. This began about five years ago and since then I have unconsciously created the material for a little exhibition devoted to her flowers.

The French call the still life, nature morte. Although cut, flowers are never static and never 'morte', in their vase they move with the sun, grow, wilt and fade. It always amazes me how much movement there is in something that should be so still. An arrangement of flowers is a very mobile, transient, fragile sort of thing and has to be painted quickly. You have to throw yourself at it and work with as much concentration and energy as you can find. I have a stove in my studio and, while painting some tuberose last week, found myself running across the room to replenish the fire. As with landscape painting, the whole process is driven with urgency.

Primarily I am a landscape painter and I tend to look at my subject from a distance. The foreground is always the hardest part of a landscape to resolve: so much detail can be hard to reconcile with the flatter shapes that make up the middle ground and distance. It's a relief to harvest a bit of the troublesome foreground, stick it in a vase and bring it into the 'laboratory' for closer examination! I like blurring the boundaries between studio, garden and landscape, turning things upside down, inside out. I like too the way that these quite wild arrangements spill chaotically out of the top of the very orderly, classic shape of the celery glass they sit in. The vase gives the arrangements a tree-like shape and in many ways I see these still lives closely related to my single tree compositions: the wide base and narrow waist of the vase are like the trunk of a tree, the flowers, the canopy. Two recent large-scale tree compositions seemed to belong with the flowers and it seemed appropriate, artistically, if not logically, to include them here. Trees and flowers combined, but the exhibition remains very personal, each painting marking the passing of time and the changing seasons at home.

Francis Hamel, February 2014

COVER: *Dahlia*, September 2011,
oil on panel
16½ x 12½ inches, 43 x 32 cm



—*Black Tulips and Euphorbia*, April 2008
oil on panel
16½ x 12½ inches, 43 x 32 cm



— *Winter flowers, December 2011, (Hazel, Viburnum and Honeysuckle)*
oil on panel
24 x 18 inches, 61 x 46 cm



— *Tuberoses, Clematis and Camellia* February 2014
oil on panel
24 x 18 inches, 61 x 46 cm



—*Japanese Anemones and Michaelmas Daisies*, October 2009
oil on panel
16½ x 12½ inches, 42 x 32 cm



—*Cornflowers and White Columbine*, July 2013
oil on panel
16½ x 12½ inches, 43 x 32 cm



—*Lilac, Cornflowers and Boule de Neige, May - June 2009*
oil on panel
24 x 16½ inches, 61 x 42 cm



— *August Tree*, 2013
oil on linen
31 x 39½ inches, 79 x 100 cm



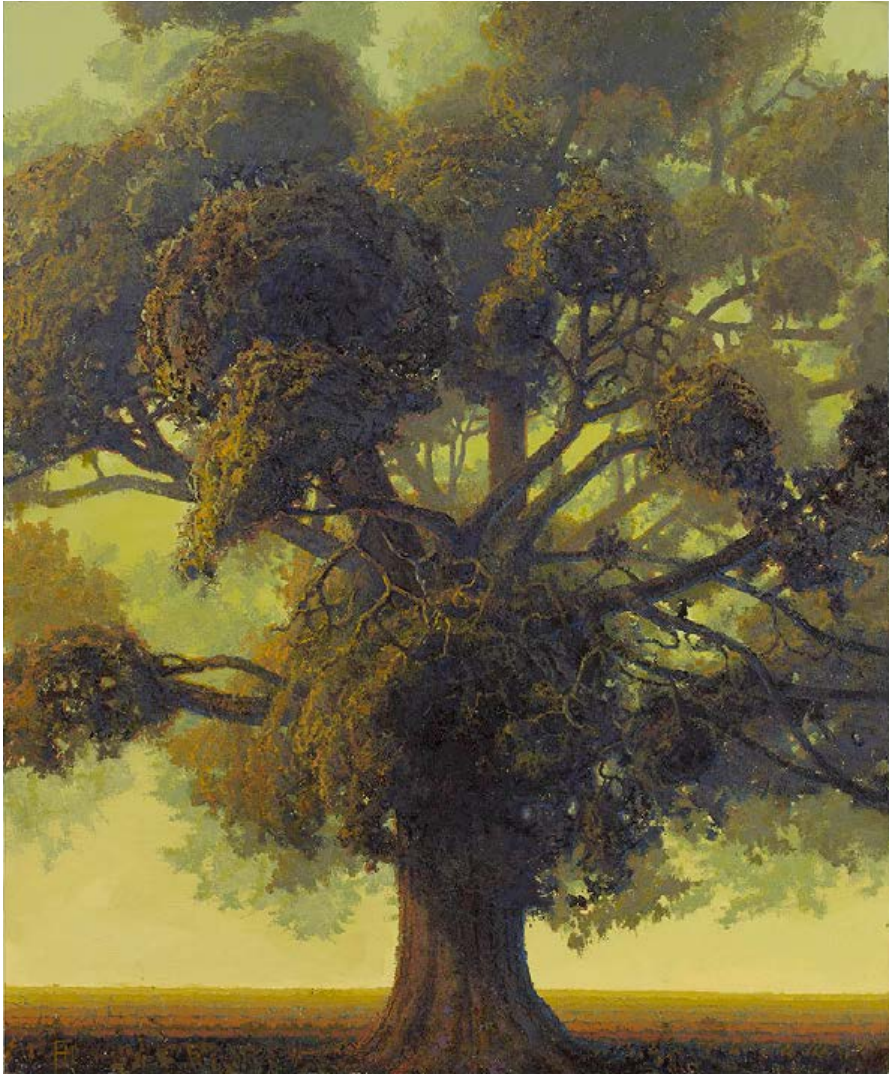
— *Spring Flowers*, April 2011
oil on panel
16½ x 12½ inches, 42 x 32 cm



—*Daffodils, March 2012*
oil on panel
16½ x 12½ inches, 43 x 32 cm



—*Hellebores*, February 2011
oil on panel
16½ x 12½ inches, 42 x 32 cm



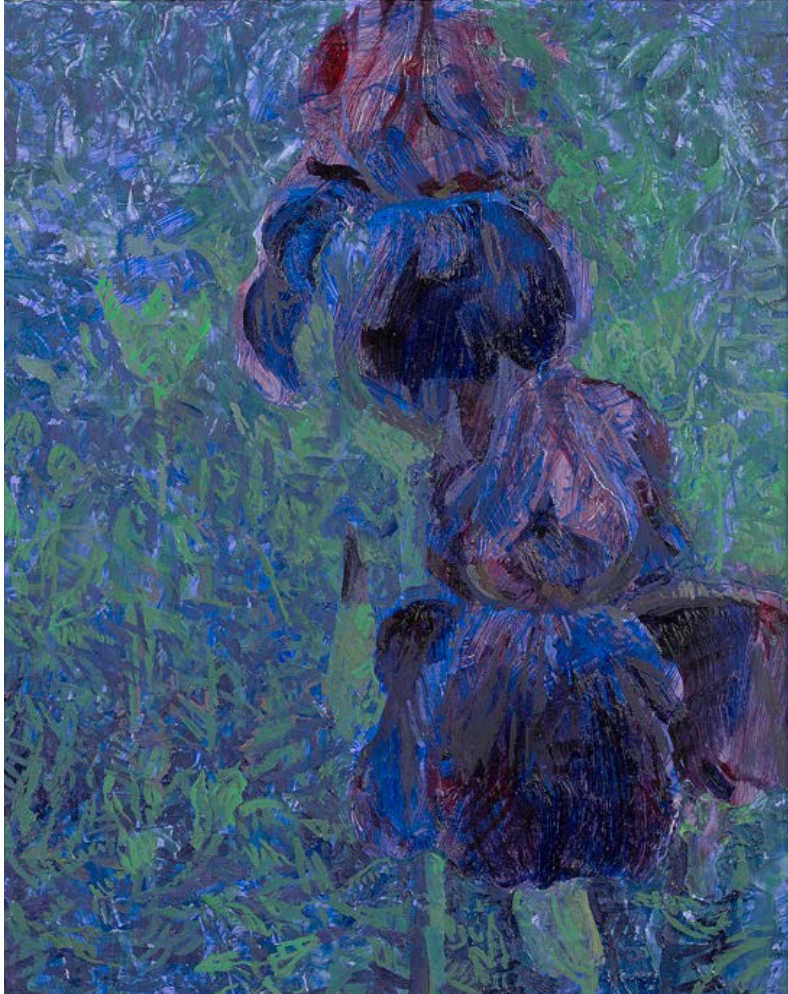
— *The Great Oak* 2013
oil on linen
48½ x 40 ins (122 x 101.5cm)



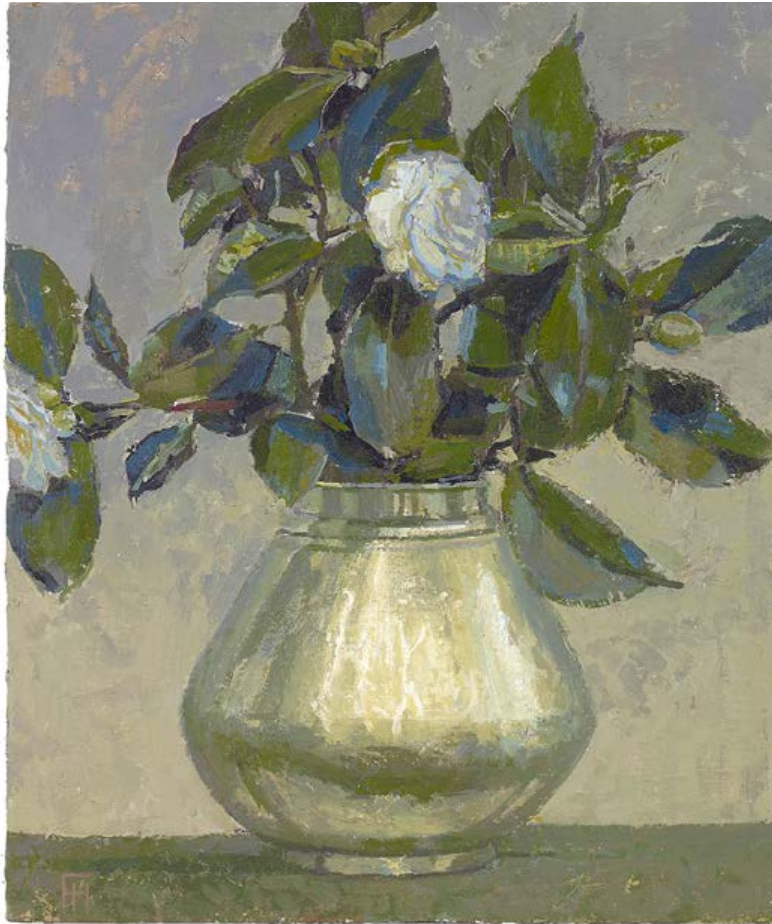
— *Cornflowers, August 2013*
oil on panel
15¼ x 11½ inches, 39 x 29 cm



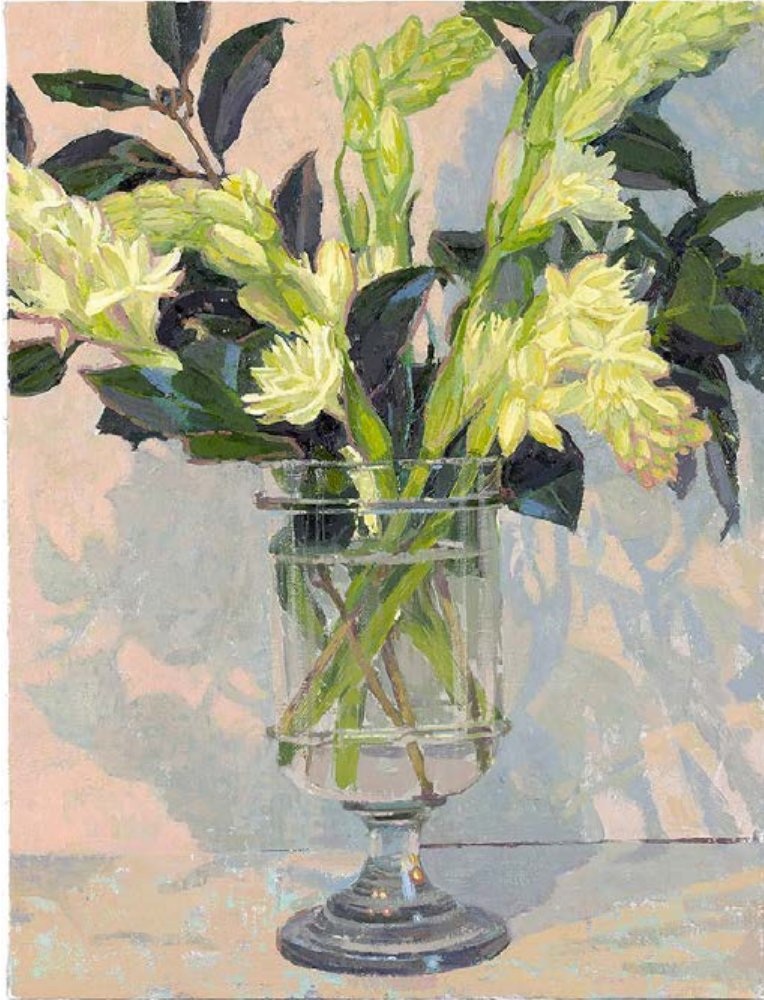
— *Winter Garden Flowers Christmas 2013*
oil on panel
24 x 18 inches, 61 x 46 cm



—*Dark Blue Irises*, May 2013
oil on panel
11¼ x 10¼ inches, 30 x 26 cm



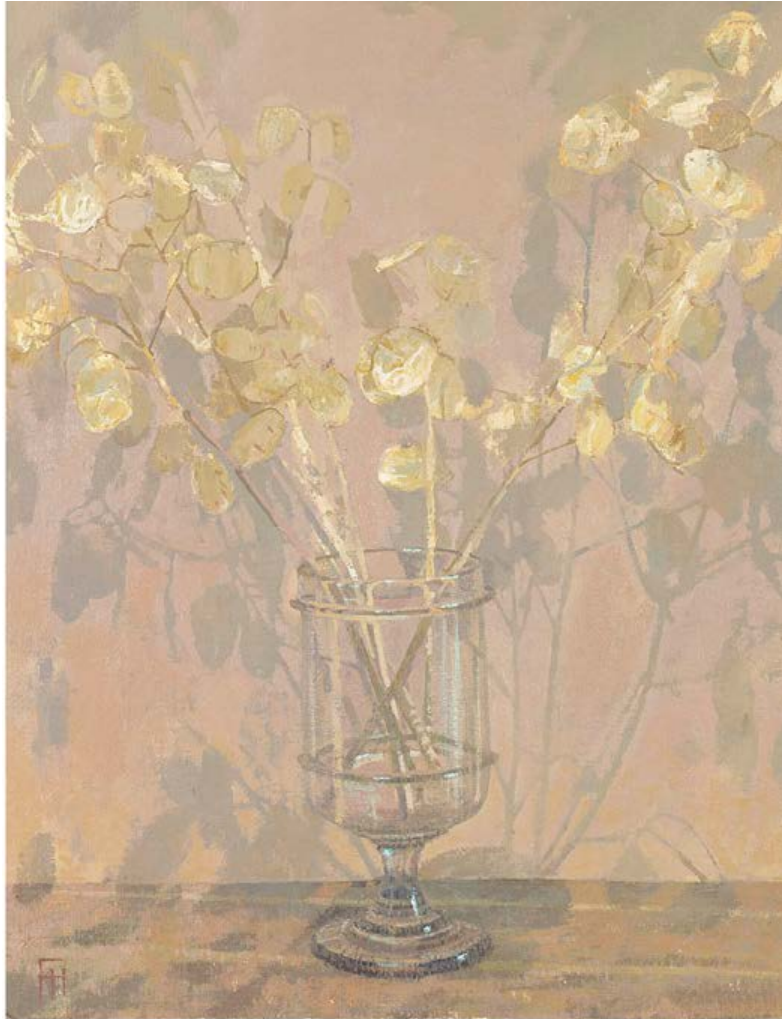
— *White Camellias* February 2014
oil on panel
19½ x 18 inches, 46 x 42 cm



— *Tuberoses* February 2014
oil on panel
16½ x 12½ inches, 42 x 32 cm



—*Narcissi with Eucalyptus and Pussy Willow* February 2014
oil on panel
21½ x 20 inches, 60 x 51 cm



— *Silver Pennies* January 2014
oil on panel
24 x 18½ inches, 61 x 47 cm



— *Autumn Tree*, 2013
oil on panel
31 x 39½ inches, 79 x 100 cm



—*Irises, May 2013*
oil on panel
23½ x 19¾ inches, 60 x 50 cm



—*Hellebores*, February 2011
oil on panel
16½ x 12½ inches, 42 x 32 cm



—*Delphiniums, Clematis and Anemones* August 2013
oil on panel
24 x 18 inches, 61 x 47 cm



—*Michaelmas Daisies and Echinacea*, October 2009
oil on panel
16½ x 12½ inches, 43 x 32 cm



—*Clematis and Anemones February 2014*
oil on panel
16½ x 12½ inches, 43 x 32 cm



—*Boule de Neige, Lilac and Cornflowers* May - June 2010
oil on panel
16½ x 12½ inches, 43 x 32 cm

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