

— Francis Hamel
Oxford Paintings

5 – 21 December 2012



John Martin Gallery

LIST OF PAINTINGS

1. *St Giles, The Eagle and Child*, oil on linen, 8x8 ins, 20x20 cm
2. *St Giles, Traffic*, oil on panel, 6x7, ins, 15x18 cm
3. *The Cherwell, University Parks*, oil on linen, 12x16 ins, 30x41 cm
4. *Turl Street (Lincoln College)*, oil on panel, 10x8 ins, 26x20 cm
5. *Woodstock Road looking towards St Giles (St Anthony's College)*, oil on panel, 7½x9 ins, 19x23 cm
6. *Turl Street Afternoon Sun (Exeter College and Jesus College)*, oil on panel, 14x11 ins, 36x28 cm
7. *Trinity*, oil on linen, 16 ½x12 ½ ins, 42x32 cm
8. *Trinity in Afternoon Sunshine*, oil on panel, 11x14 ins 28x36 cm
9. *Keble*, oil on panel. 11x14 ins 28x36 cm
10. *Cedar Tree Woodstock Road*, oil on linen, 8x10 ins, 21x26 cm
11. *Broad Street in the Rain (Clarendon Building and Sheldonian Theatre)*, oil on linen, 12x9 ins, 31x23 cm
12. *Oak*, oil on panel, 9x9 ins, 23x23 cm
13. *Woodstock Road, Radcliffe (St Anthony's)*, oil on panel, 10x12 ins, 25x32cm
14. *George Street*, oil on panel, 9x9 ins, 23x23 cm
15. *Umbrellas in The Cornmarket (Christ Church)*, oil on linen, 12x11 ins, 31 x 28 cm
16. *St Giles March Morning*, oil on panel, 6½x5½ ins, 16x14 cm
17. *St Giles Winter Morning*, oil on panel, 10x11½ ins, 25x29 cm
18. *Worcester*, oil on linen, 11x15 ins, 28x38 cm
19. *The House, Tom Tower (Christ Church)*, oil on panel, 9x7 ins, 22x18 cm
20. *The Turl (Lincoln College, Jesus College and Exeter College)*, oil on linen, 15x11 ins, 38x28 cm
21. *Queen's Lane, St Edmund Hall*, oil on panel, 11x14 ins, 28x36 cm
22. *Woodstock Road, Winter sketch*, oil on panel, 8x10 ins, 20x26 cm
23. *St Giles in Afternoon Sunshine (St John's and Balliol)*, oil on linen, 11x15 ins, 28x38 cm
24. *Cornmarket in the Rain*, oil on linen, 20x15 ins, 51x38 cm
25. *Woodstock Road, Cyclist*, oil on panel, 8x10 ins, 20x25 cm
26. *St Giles in Winter Sunshine (St John's)*, oil on linen, 15x20 ins, 38x50 cm
27. *The Rainbow Bridge in Early Autumn*, oil on panel, 24x36 ins, 61 x 92 cm
28. *Christ Church from Christ Church Meadow*, oil on linen, 15x20 ins, 38x51, cm
29. *The Turl in Rain, Jesus And Exeter Colleges*, oil on linen, 20x15 ins, 51 x 38 cm
30. *The Thames from Port Meadow*, oil on panel, 15x18 ins, 38x46 cm
31. *Cornmarket*, oil on panel, 12x11 ins, 31 x 28 cm
32. *The Bodleian*, oil on linen, 9x8 ins, 23x19 cm
33. *The Rainbow Bridge, Port Meadow with the Queen's College Barge*, oil on panel, 8x12 ins, 20x29 cm
34. *The Eagle and Child*, oil on panel, 20x15 ins, 51 x 38 cm
35. *The Rainbow Bridge, University Parks*, oil on panel, 12x12 ins, 30x30 cm
36. *Binsey Poplars Study*, oil on panel, 9x8 ins, 24x21 cm
37. *The Sheldonian and Emperor's Heads*, oil on linen, 17x12 ins, 42x32 cm
38. *St Giles with Plane Tree*, oil on panel, 20x15 ins, 51 x 38 cm
39. *Binsey Poplars, Young and Old*, oil on panel, 24x30 ins, 61 x 91 cm
40. *Poplar Tree, Port Meadow*, oil on panel. 48x37 ins, 122x94 cm
41. *St Giles from the Ashmolean*, oil on linen. 15x20 ins, 38x51 cm
42. *St Giles Autumn Afternoon (St John's)*, oil on linen, 15x20 ins, 38x51 cm
43. *St Giles Winter Sky (St John's)*, oil on linen, 15x20, ins, 38x51 cm
44. *Oxford from Boar's Hill*, oil on panel, 6x11 ins, 16x28 cm
45. *The Entrance to Christ Church*, oil on panel, 10x8 ins, 26x20 cm
46. *The Thames looking from Port Meadow to Wytham Woods*, oil on panel, 14x18 ins, 36x46 cm

John Martin Gallery

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COVER: *Rainbow Bridge University Parks*, (cat. 35), oil on panel, 30x30 cm, 12x12 ins
ABOVE: *Cornmarket in the Rain*, (cat. 24), oil on linen, 51x38 cm, 20x15 in



— *Turl Street in Afternoon Sun*, (cat. 6) oil on panel, 36x28 cm, 14x 11 ins

Introduction by Colin Harrison

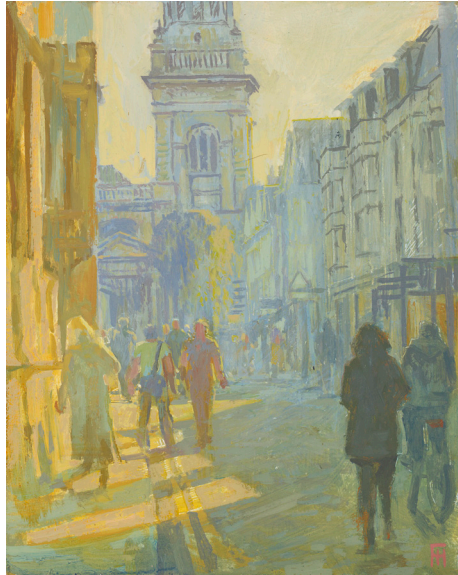
Those of us who live and work in Oxford tend to take the beauties of the city for granted. Indeed, it is often only when they are altered or subsumed by new buildings insensitively positioned that they become cherished. Recently, the view of the dreaming spires from Port Meadow, the ancient common land to the north-west of Oxford, has been completely obliterated by a range of buildings which are no doubt functional, but completely destroy one of the many distant prospects that should have been preserved.

Fortunately, artists have recorded Oxford consistently since the middle of the seventeenth century. Most of the early drawings and engravings are of only antiquarian interest, including the first 90 or so views published as part of the Oxford Almanack, the University calendar, since 1674. However, beginning with the German violinist, John 'Baptist' Malchair, who settled in Oxford in 1759, artists began to depict the more picturesque aspects of the city, both within the mediaeval walls, and from the distant hills to the west, south, and east. Malchair was also the first of a succession of drawing masters to instil into his undergraduate pupils a delight not only in the set pieces – the High Street, the facade of Christ Church with Tom Tower designed by Sir Christopher Wren, and so on – but in the many byways and hidden corners that still abound. Later, the great J. M. W. Turner was fascinated by Oxford throughout his life, recording his delight in a series of watercolours from his teenage years to his maturity. His final watercolour, Oxford from North Hinksey of c. 1839 (now in Manchester City Art Gallery) shows the city at its most romantic, a visual equivalent of Matthew Arnold's lines in 'Thyrsis' evoking 'That sweet city with her dreaming spires'. Turner's successors could not compete, but, in any case, Oxford was changing: the arrival of the railway, the 'brickish skirt' of suburbia, and eventually the Morris Motor Works, transformed the setting, but the heart was largely preserved.

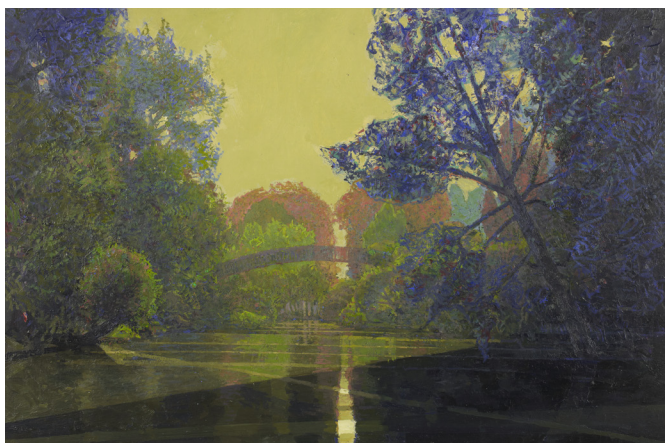
The foundation of John Ruskin's School of Drawing in 1871 might have heralded a new intensity in the artistic activity in Oxford; but Ruskin had a very particular method of teaching, and never intended his students to become professional artists. Indeed, he scarcely allowed them to draw in the open air. His successors have been more liberal, though it is still remarkable that very few of the Ruskin students take advantage of the opportunities offered by their surroundings. Francis Hamel is an important exception. He has long been familiar with Oxford, from his student days at the Ruskin School. Unusually, he has concentrated on the representational, whilst most of his contemporaries have been seduced by one or other trend in abstraction; or given up altogether. His subjects may seem traditional, but his language is highly individual, with reminiscences of painters from Van Gogh to Bratby.

Hamel's view of Oxford is essentially a Romantic one: even the horrors of the Cornmarket, now lined from end to end with chain stores, though often in historically important buildings, seem exotic in the rain, the paving stones glistening and the umbrellas creating an effect more familiar in Paris in the Second Empire than England in 2012. This is not to suggest that Hamel shirks modernity. His paintings are full of bollards and traffic lights as well as the inevitable bicycles, those inveterate inhabitants of a university city; and the triangular traffic signs, ugly in themselves but adding an essential touch of red to the picture, as artists from Constable onwards have discovered. Looking down St Giles, for example, we see little of the noble town houses that still line the street, but instead, an orderly file of telegraph poles receding into the distance, complemented by two upside-down red triangles, articulating a complex traffic junction. Hamel paints the hurly-burly of the busy thoroughfares, and the calm of the University Parks, Christ Church Meadow, and Port Meadow. Unlike most landscape artists, he is not afraid of people; but it is his trees which seem to indicate the essential character of the scene, whether it is the ancient chestnut tree in the Turl, or the noble poplars in Port Meadow. These paintings are not antiquarian records or picture postcards, but studies in weather and light and mood. Together, they constitute an entirely personal vision of Oxford in the early years of the twenty-first century.

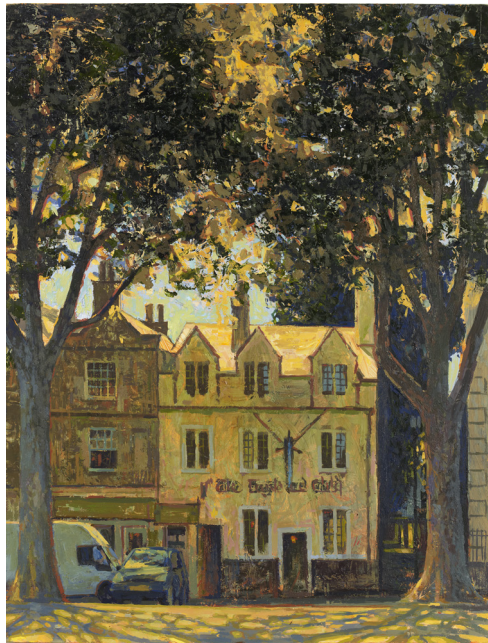
— Colin Harrison is a Senior Curator of European Art at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.



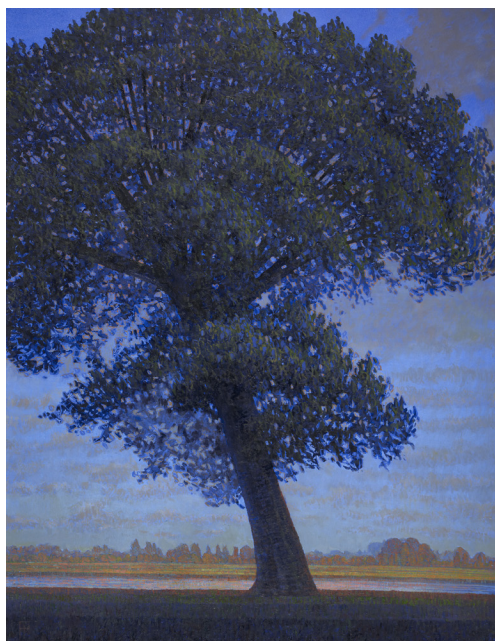
— *Turl Street* (cat. 4), oil on panel, 25x20 cm, 10x8 ins



—*Rainbow Bridge in Early Autumn*, (cat.27), oil on panel, 61 x 91 cm, 24 x 36 ins



— *The Eagle and Child*, (cat. 34), oil on panel, 51 x 38 cm, 20 x 15 ins



—*Poplar Tree, Port Meadow*, (cat. 40), oil on panel 121 x 94 cm, 48 x 37 ins



— *The Turf*, (cat. 20), oil on linen, 38x28 cm, 15x11 ins



— *Trinity*, (cat..7), oil on linen, 42x32 cm, 17 x 12 ins



— *Turl Street in Afternoon Sun*, (cat. 6) oil on panel, 36x28 cm, 14x 11 ins



—*The Thames looking from Port Meadow to Wytham Woods, (cat. 46)*, oil on panel, 35x45 cm, 14x18 ins



— *St Giles with Plane Tree* (cat. 38), oil on panel, 51 x 38 cm, 20 x 15 ins



—*Christ Church from Christ Church Meadow*, (cat. 28), oil on linen, 15x20 ins, 38x51cm



— *St Giles Winter Morning*, (cat. 17), oil on panel, 25x29 cm, 10x11½ ins



— *St Giles in Winter Sunshine* (cat. 26), oil on linen, 15x20 ins, 38x50 cm



—*The Turl in Rain*, (cat. 29), oil on linen, 20x15 ins, 51 x 38 cm



— *The Thames from Port Meadow (cat. 30)*, oil on panel, 15x18 ins, 38x46 cm



— *The Sheldonian and Emperor's Heads* (cat. 37), oil on linen, 17x12 ins, 42x32 cm



— *Binsey Poplars, Young and Old* (cat. 39), oil on panel, 24x30 ins, 61 x 91 cm



— *Broad Street in the Rain* (cat. 11), oil on linen, 12x9 ins, 31 x23 cm



— *The House, Tom Tower* (cat. 19), oil on panel, 9x7 ins, 22x18 cm



—*Trinity in Afternoon Sunshine* (cat. 8), oil on panel, 11 x 14 ins 28x36 cm



—*Worcester (cat.18)*, oil on linen, 11 x 15 ins, 28x38 cm



— *Keble* (cat. 9), oil on panel. 11 x 14 ins 28 x 36 cm

Francis Hamel studied at the Ruskin School of Fine Art and Magdalen College, Oxford and now divides his time between Oxfordshire and Le Marche, Italy. As well as his numerous exhibitions, Hamel has also undertaken large scale painting commissions for Fortnum and Mason, The Prince of Wales Theatre and Wyndhams Theatre, London as well as portrait commissions including, most recently, a portrait of the Prime Minister, David Cameron. His work is held in private and corporate collections in the U.S.A., Russia, Japan, Africa and throughout Europe.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2012 *Oxford Paintings 2012*, John Martin Gallery, London & Magdalen Grove Auditorium, Magdalen College, Oxford
Studio D'arte Lanza, Verbania
- 2011 *Lago Maggiore*, Milano 2011, Edward Cutler Gallery, Milan
- 2010 *Italian Formal Gardens and Their Landscapes*,
John Martin Gallery, London
Theatre Paintings, The Charles Dickens Museum, London
- 2009 *Theatre Paintings*, John Martin Gallery at Art London
- 2008 *Three Years in the Italian Marches*,
John Martin Gallery, London
- 2008 *Trees*, John Martin Gallery, London
- 2007 *Circus Paintings*, John Martin Gallery, London
- 2006 *Landscapes 2004-2006*,
John Martin Gallery, London
- 2004 *Oxford Paintings*, John Martin Gallery, London & Said Business School, Oxford
- 2003 *Recent Work 2002-2003*,
John Martin Gallery, London
- 2002 *Francis Hamel*, John Martin Gallery, London
- 2000 *Francis Hamel*, John Martin Gallery, London
- 1997 *Francis Hamel*, John Martin Gallery, London
- 1995 *Francis Hamel*, John Martin Gallery, London
- 1984 Magdalen College, Oxford
- 1983 Newman Rooms, Oxford