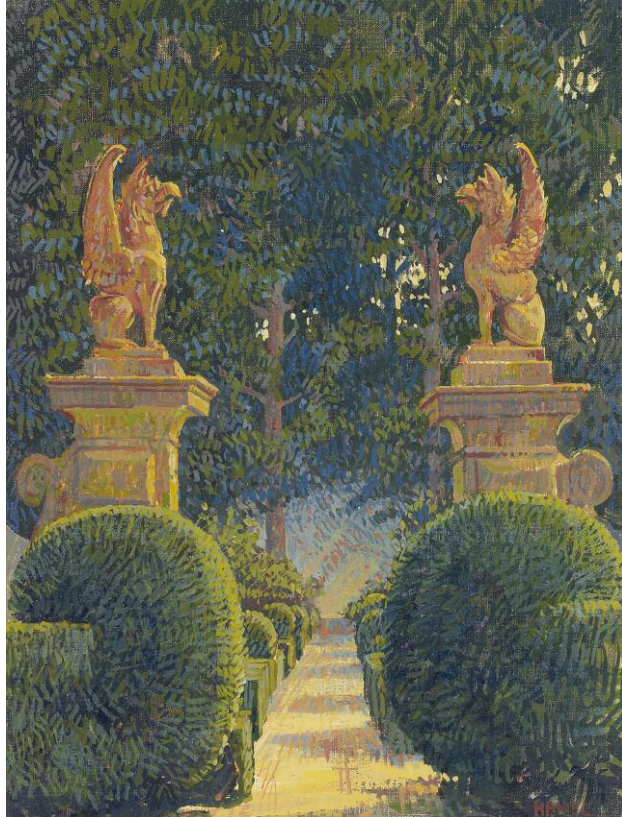


FRANCIS HAMEL

Italian Formal Gardens and their Landscapes



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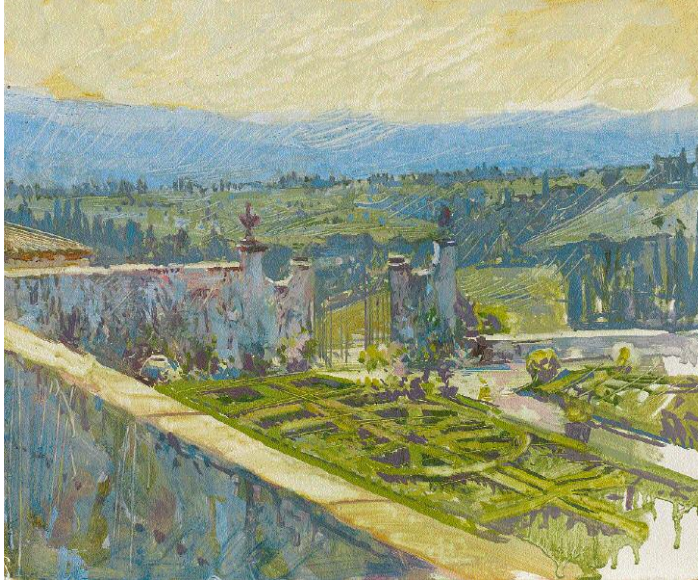
## Italian Formal Gardens and their Landscapes

24th November - 11th December 2010

9.

Two Griffins, Villa Capponi  
oil on linen 12 x 9 ins 30.5 x 23 cm

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33.  
First sketch at the Villa Corsini, May 2010  
oil on gesso 10 x 12 ins 25 x 30.5 cm

Sometimes, when talking to Italians about their gardens, they are defensive. They can't seem to conceal their envy for our gentle temperate climate, the abundance of water and the willingness of so many things to grow here. Their envy is of course mirrored by ours for the structure and design of the great Italian gardens and for their climate which allows them actually to be lived in. They are often extensions of the home, roofless interiors that act as a stepping stone between the villa and the surrounding landscape. Italian gardens are built, English gardens grown.

The relationship between the garden and the landscape beyond is one of the main themes in this collection of paintings. I had thought originally that the landscape beyond would be wilder and more chaotic but in many of the places I visited the transition was almost seamless. The landscape in Tuscany in particular feels like a giant park with its cypresses, vines and olives and with the villas and farms that seem somehow to pre-date the landscape itself. The drama and formality of the Italian villa interior flows out into the landscape furnishing and taming it and blurring the boundaries. The idea of the garden as a bit of wilderness 'house trained' or domesticated has huge appeal to the landscape painter. The painter and the gardener are often playing the same game and trying to satisfy the same audiences.

I started my 'tour' in early spring 2010 with a visit to Isola Bella on Lake Maggiore. An incredible clear sunny day with snow still on the surrounding mountains, this is one of the most decadent and romantic places ever conceived; it still offers a very distilled form of escape from the 'real world'. As the spring progressed I went on to the Villa Lante and Caprarola, Buonaccorsi near our home in Le Marche and then to Florence in May to visit Villa Gamberaia, the Corsini villa at Mezzomonte, Villa La Pietra, Castello and La Petraia. In June I went to Cetinale and Vincobello near Siena and in July returned to Mezzomonte and la Pietra and

went to see the garden at Trebbio. In September I went to see three of the great gardens near Lucca, the Villa Torrigiani at Camigliano, the Villa Garzoni at Collodi and the Villa Reale at Marlia. I finished in Florence again at I Tatti, the Villa Capponi and the gardens at Torre di Belosguardo.

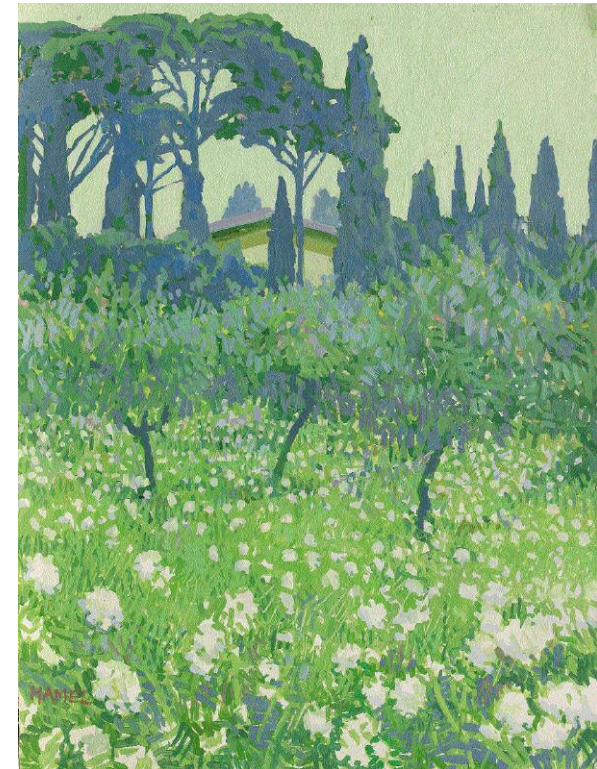
All the paintings were started in situ and then completed in my studio. That's why most of the pictures are quite small.

Many of the gardens are overtly theatrical, three of them actually have outdoor theatres, cypress proscenium arches and box wings, actors and actresses carved in stone and grassy stalls. The theatre theme (John Martin. Art London 2009) has continued but the cast sit still and the lights stay on for longer in the gardens.

These pictures shamelessly offer escape, Italian formal gardens and their landscapes are some of the most beautiful places in the world and I have done my best to try and capture a bit of their magic. I would like to thank Angela Lloyd for getting me started and Rosalynd Pio for guiding so expertly and entertaining me so generously. Thanks too for allowing me into their beautiful gardens to (in chronological order) The Earl of Durham, Selina Bonelli Zondadari, Cristina Fantacci Cellini and New York University, Principe Giovanni Corsini, Donna Vittoria Colonna, Professore Lino Pertile and The University of Harvard, Baron and Baroness Amerigo Franchetti and Maria Teresa Benedetti. Thanks too to Charles and Angela Cottrell-Dormer for letting me live and work in a bit of Italy imported by William Kent in the eighteenth century, blended with England and lovingly tended at Rousham in Oxfordshire since then by them and their forebears. The best of both worlds.

Francis Hamel

Rousham, October 2010



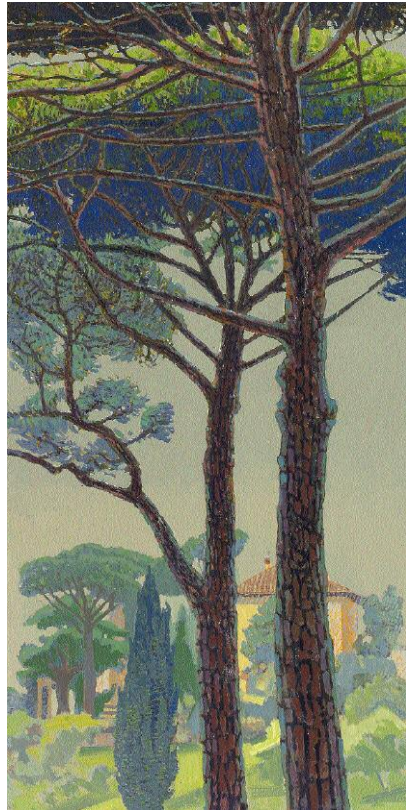
12.  
Villa Sassetti from Villa La Pietra  
oil on gesso 12 x 9 ins 30.5 x 23 cm

LIST OF WORKS

1. Caprarola  
oil on linen  
48 x 38 ins 122 x 96.5 cm
2. Villa Corsini Garden, at Mezzomonte  
oil on linen  
24 x 48 ins 61 x 122 cm
3. The Garden at the Villa Corsini in the Afternoon, July 2010  
oil on linen  
24 x 48 ins 61 x 122 cm
4. Isola Bella, steps & statuary  
oil on linen  
14¼ x 8½ ins 36 x 22 cm
5. Pine Trees in the gardens of La Pietra  
oil on linen  
18 x 9 ins 46 x 23 cm
6. The Gardens at La Pietra  
oil on linen  
12 x 9 ins 30.5 x 23 cm
7. The Statue of Fame, Villa Garzoni  
oil on linen  
12 x 9 ins 30.5 x 23 cm
8. The Archway Torre di Bellosguardo  
oil on linen  
16 x 10 ins 41 x 25 cm
9. Two Griffins, Villa Capponi  
oil on linen  
12 x 9 ins 30.5 x 23 cm

10. View from the gardens at Villa Capponi  
oil on linen  
10 x 8 ins 25 x 20 cm
11. View of Florence cathedral from La Pietra  
oil on linen  
9½ x 8 ins 24 x 20 cm
12. Villa Sassetti from Villa La Pietra  
oil on gesso  
12 x 9 ins 30.5 x 23 cm
13. San Martino alla Palma from Fattoria Torricino  
oil on panel  
5¼ x 6½ ins 15 x 16.5 cm
14. The Gardens Villa at La Pietra  
oil on gesso  
18 x 9 ins 46 x 23 cm
15. The Duomo from Via Bolognese, La Pietra  
oil on linen  
12 x 5¾ ins 30.5 x 15 cm
16. Cypress Avenue in front of the Villa Torrigiani  
oil on linen  
15¾ x 9¾ ins 40 x 25 cm
17. Isola Bella  
oil on gesso  
7 x 9 ins 19 x 23 cm
18. Isola Bella in late March  
oil on gesso  
7 x 12 ins 18 x 30.5 cm
19. Villa Gamberaia  
oil on linen  
12¾ x 16 ins 32 x 41 cm
20. Villa I Tatti  
oil on linen  
8 x 9 ins 20 x 24 cm
21. A view from the terrace of the Villa Corsini at Mezzomonte  
oil on linen  
6¾ x 7¼ ins 17 x 18 cm
22. A view from Mezzomonte, Tuscany  
oil on linen  
9 x 9 ins 23 x 23 cm
23. Giardino Corsini at Mezzomonte  
oil on linen  
7 x 8 ins 18 x 20 cm
24. Corsini Garden, early morning  
oil on gesso  
10 x 15¾ ins 25 x 40 cm
25. Cetinale  
oil on linen  
9 x 12 ins 23 x 30.5 cm
26. Cow Castle, Rousham  
oil on linen  
9 x 9 ins 24 x 23 cm
27. Le Marche landscape  
oil on linen  
9 x 12 ins 23 x 30.5 cm
28. Le Marche in the evening  
oil on linen  
9 x 12 ins 23 x 32 cm
29. Spring morning in Le Marche  
oil on linen  
11 x 13 ins 29 x 34 cm
30. Sunlit Road in Le Marche  
oil on linen  
9 x 11 ins 23 x 28 cm
31. Torre Di Bellosguardo  
oil on linen  
7 x 9 ins 18 x 23 cm
32. Villa Reale, Marlia  
oil on linen  
10 x 16 ins 27 x 41 cm
33. First sketch at the Villa Corsini, May 2010  
oil on gesso  
10 x 12 ins 25 x 30.5 cm
34. Fig  
oil on panel  
7 x 8 ins 19 x 20 cm
35. Two Oranges  
oil on panel  
6¾ x 9¾ ins 17 x 25 cm
36. Two Lemons  
oil on linen  
6 x 7¾ ins 15 x 20 cm
37. Three Lemons  
oil on linen  
7 x 8 ins 18 x 22 cm
38. Four Lemons  
Oil on linen  
10 x 12 ins 25 x 30.5 cm

Paintings illustrated are for sale upon receipt of catalogue  
Additional works will be available from the exhibition

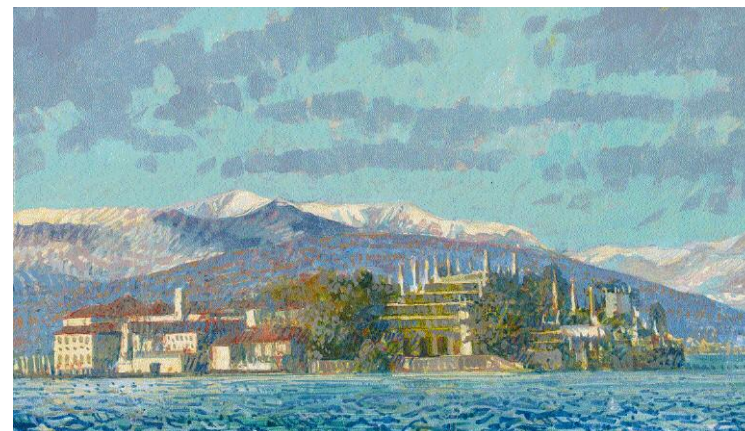


5. Pine Trees in the gardens of La Pietra  
oil on gesso 18 x 9 ins 46 x 23 cm

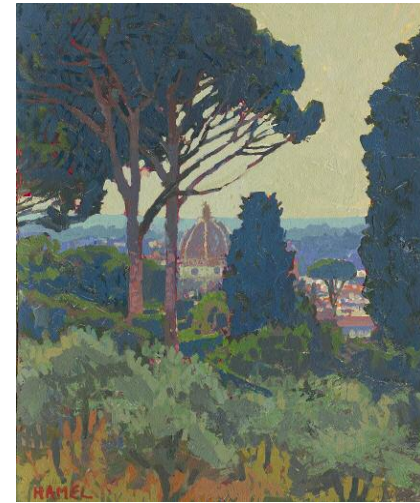


17.  
Isola Bella  
oil on gesso 7½ x 9 ins 19 x 23 cm

18.  
Isola Bella in late March  
oil on gesso 7 x 12 ins 18 x 30.5 cm

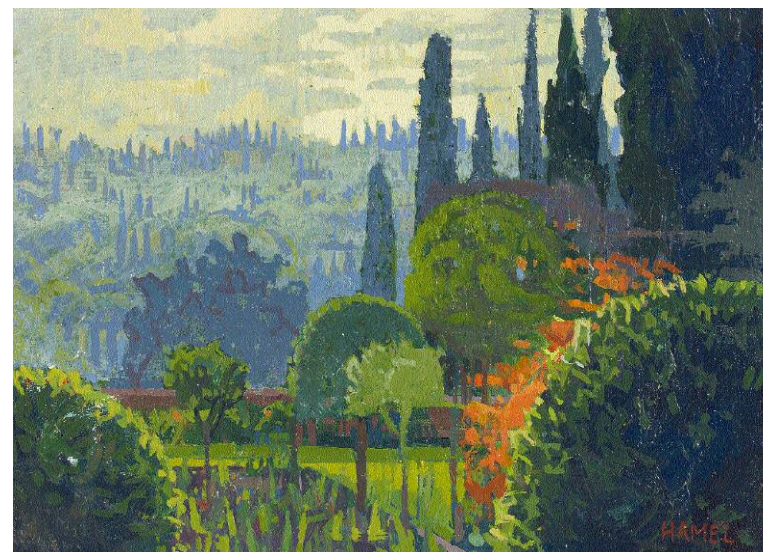


11.  
View of Florence cathedral from La Pietra  
oil on linen 9½ x 8 ins 24 x 20 cm





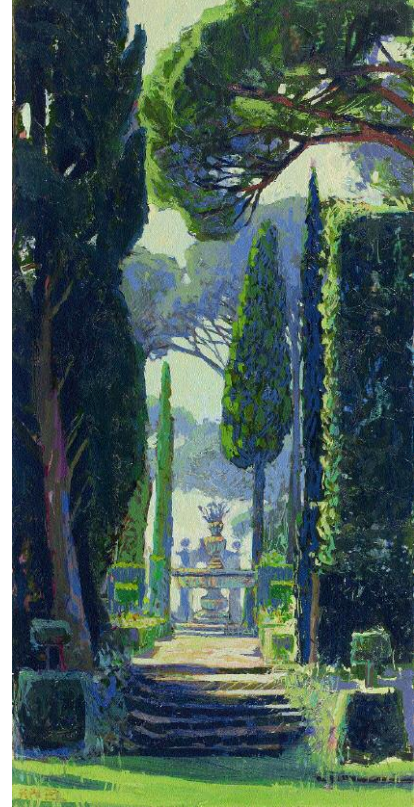
31.  
Torre Di Bellosguardo  
oil on linen 7 x 9 ins 18 x 23 cm



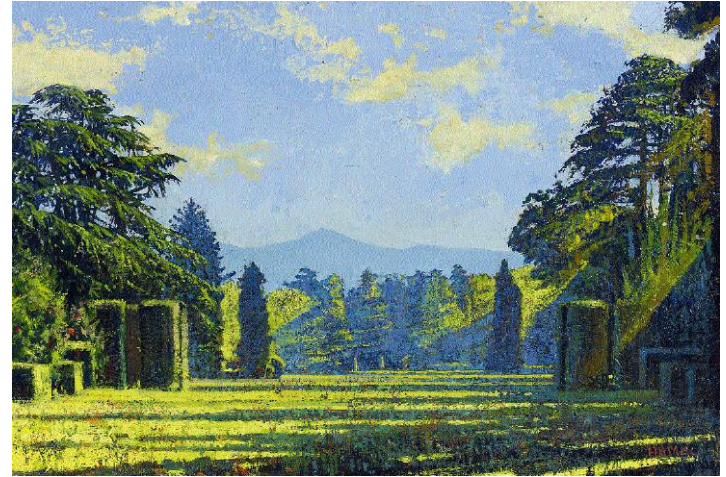


13.  
San Martino alla Palma from Fattoria Torricino  
oil on panel 5¼ x 6½ ins 15 x 16.5 cm

14.  
The Gardens at Villa La Pietra  
oil on gesso 18 x 9 ins 46 x 23 cm

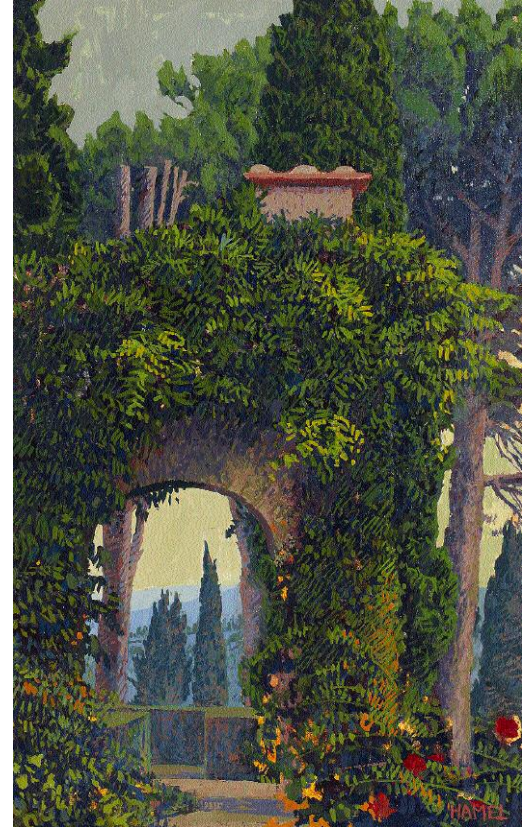


32.  
Villa Reale, Marlia  
oil on linen 10½ x 16 ins 27 x 41 cm

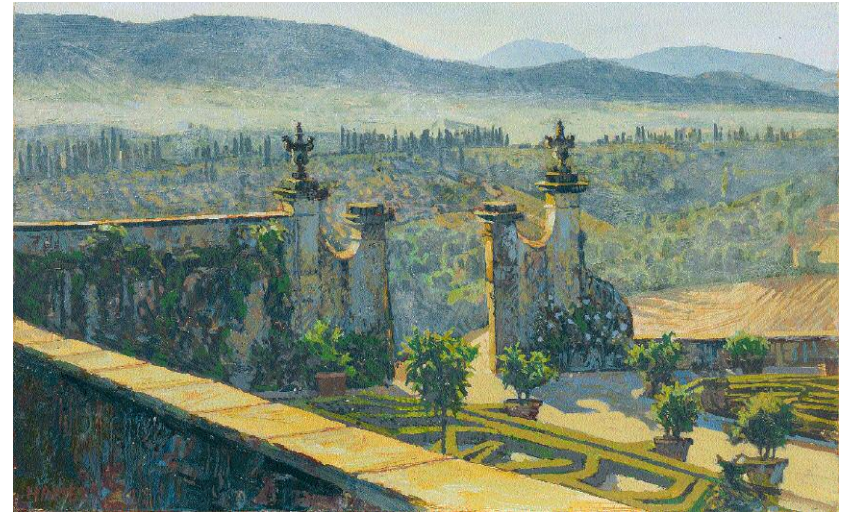




10.  
View from the gardens at Villa Capponi  
oil on linen 10 x 8 ins 25 x 20 cm

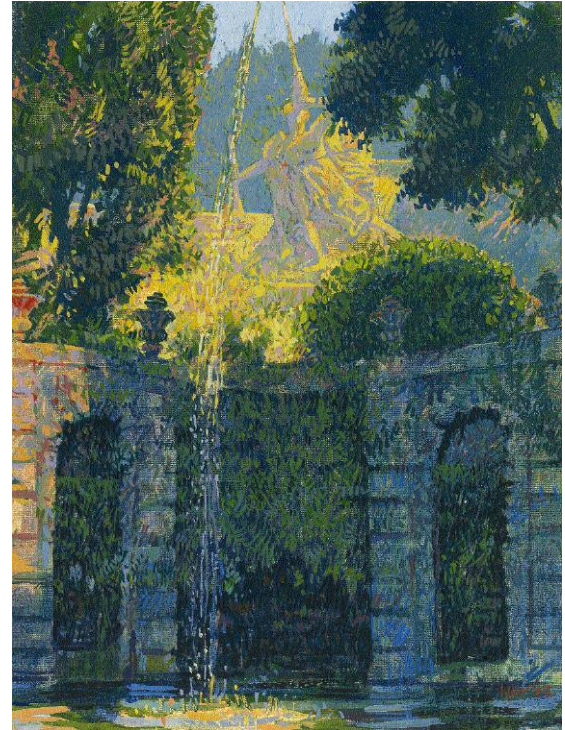


8.  
The Archway, Torre di Bellosguardo  
oil on linen 16 x 10 ins 41 x 25 cm



8.  
Corsini Garden, early morning  
oil on gesso 10 x 15 $\frac{3}{4}$  ins 25 x 40 cm

7.  
The Statue of Fame, Villa Garzoni  
oil on linen 12 x 9 ins 30.5 x 23 cm



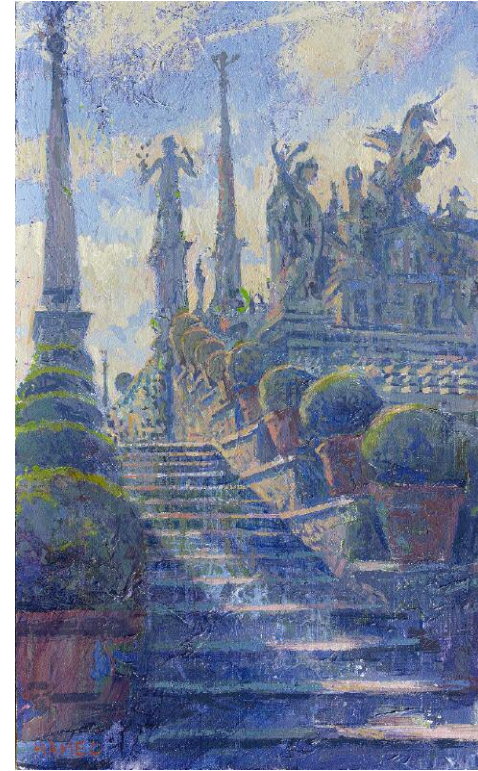


25.  
Cetinale  
oil on linen 9 x 12 ins 23 x 30.5 cm



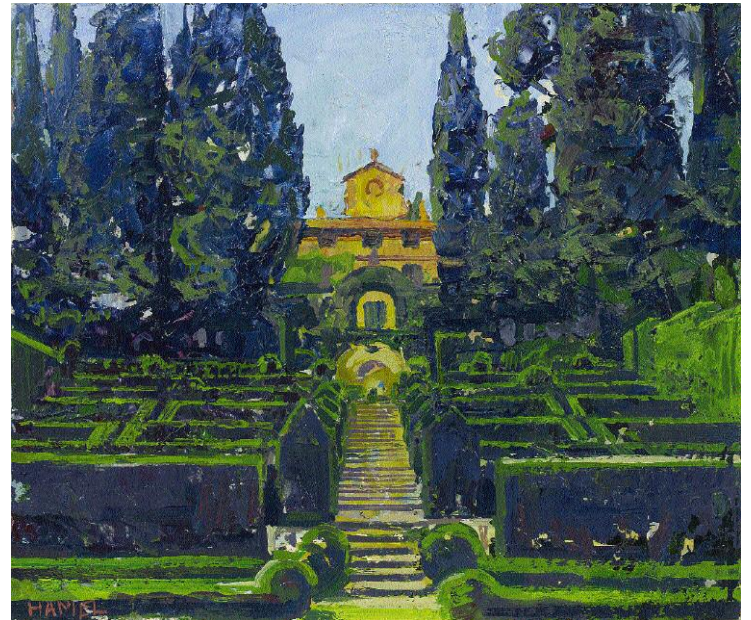
19.  
Villa Gamberaia  
oil on linen 12¾ x 16 ins 32 x 41 cm

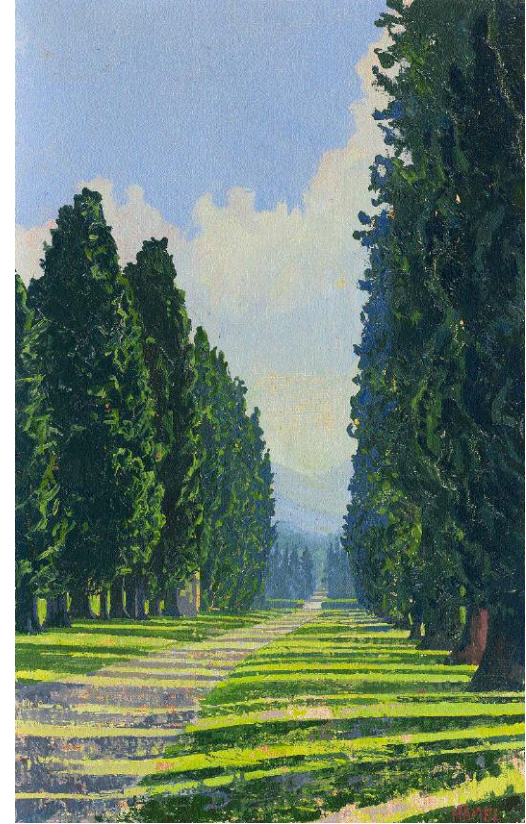




4.  
Isola Bella, steps & statuary  
oil on linen 14¼ x 8½ ins 36 x 22 cm

20.  
Villa I Tatti  
oil on linen 8 x 9½ ins 20 x 24 cm





18.  
Cypress Avenue in front of the Villa Torrigiani  
oil on linen 15¾ x 9¾ ins 40 x 25 cm



photo by Emerald Hamel-Cooke