

Contemporary Photographic Practice and the Landscape Tradition in East Anglia

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List of contents:

Pages:

3 - 6	Introduction: <i>Returning, Repeating and Recovering</i>
7 - 12	Chapter one: <i>What Has Been Gathered Will Disperse</i>
13 - 19	Chapter two: <i>On the Edge of the Murmur of Things Divine</i>
20 - 30	Chapter three: <i>The View from Here</i>
31 - 36	Chapter four: <i>Countless Edens</i>
37 - 41	Conclusion
42 - 44	Epilogue: <i>The Songs That Saints Sing Have No Ending</i>
45 - 58	Illustrations
59 - 63	Bibliography
64 - 67	List of illustrations

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Introduction: *Returning, Repeating and Recovering*

Over the course of the last twenty-three years both my research and photographic practice have primarily concentrated on the landscape, and in particular, the topography of East Anglia. The work has been informed by the landscape painting that has been produced in the region by Thomas Gainsborough, John Constable, Cedric Morris, the Norwich School and latterly John Nash amongst others. Within my images there is an awareness of the landscape tradition which I am following and an affinity with those artists and writers who, through observation, translate the landscape into a world of their own making. This representation of the pastoral landscape, evident in the work of Constable in particular, has come to symbolise a version of the English landscape tradition in painting. These are bucolic and idealised pictures of a landscape seemingly in harmony with itself. To think about Constable and to an extent, through lineage, Gainsborough, one has to engage with this legacy. It is a broad and encompassing topic. However, the range of debates has recently been summarised in Malcolm Andrews's *A Sweet View: Making an English Idyll*.¹ This deals with the later 18th century and the 19th century. David Matless's book *Landscape and Englishness* charts the social and political landscape from the interwar years onwards, bringing a chronological order and a far-reaching anthropological analysis to bear.² Although perhaps the most complete overview in this respect, Matless, however, does not enter into any extended arts discourse. The politics of the post-war regeneration of the landscape has also been comprehensively covered in a number of texts and articles.³ Again, while most of these do not venture into the territory of providing any assessment of art practice, they do provide a broad socio-political underpinning to any subsequent cultural reading. The geopolitical and socioeconomic contextualisation provided by these texts is therefore integral to the broader investigations considered in this text.

In his paper 'Politics and the English Landscape since the First World War', Peter Mandler quotes Patrick Abercrombie, the founder of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England: 'The most essential thing which is England' insisted Abercrombie, 'is the Countryside, the

¹ ANDREWS, Malcolm. *A Sweet View: Making an English Idyll*, London, Reaktion Books, 2021.

² MATLESS, David. *Landscape and Englishness*, London, Reaktion Books, 2016 (first edition 1998).

³ HARRINGTON, Ralph. 'Landscape with Bulldozer: Machines, Modernity and Environment in Post-War Britain', in AGAR, Jon (ed) & WARD, Jacob (ed). *Histories of Technology, the Environment and Modern Britain*, London, UCL Press, 2018, pp. 41-61. LOEFFLER, Toby Henry. 'The "Backbone of England": History, Memory, Landscape and the Fordian Reconstruction of Englishness', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, Vol. 53, No.1, 2011, pp. 1-25.

MANDLER, Peter. 'Politics and the English Landscape since the First World War', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Summer 1992, Vol. 55, No. 3, pp. 459-476.

POWERS, Alan. 'Modernism and Romantic Regeneration in the English Landscape, 1920-1940', *Studies in the History of Art*, Vol. 78, 2015, pp. 71-94.

Village, the Hedgerow Trees, the Lanes, the Copses, the Farmsteads'.⁴ Matless, in *Landscape and Englishness*, provides a context for Abercrombie's somewhat reactionary perception of the countryside, in that, for those living in 20th-century England, and after the horrors of the Great War, the 18th century was perceived as a time when the nation was at the peak of its beauty and in harmonious co-existence with its working landscape. Although painted later, Constable's landscapes had come to represent elements of this adjudged parity. In what was literally a warning sign against modern capitalist-driven destruction of this rural heritage, the Council for the Preservation of Rural England commissioned a cartoon for the 1929 Save the Countryside exhibition, titled *Had John Constable Lived To-day*, depicting a billboarded, tourist-driven *Hay Wain* complete with tea-shops, petrol pumps and rampant commercialism. (fig 1)⁵ Eighty-two years later, an article in *The Times* references the same Constable painting. In a proposed expansion of the National Grid, the *Hay Wain* is now straddled with super-imposed pylons in a piece bemoaning the possible disfigurement of a landscape that has come to represent a measure of rural beauty. (fig 2)⁶ Both suggest that in changing the landscape we would be losing a symbol of what has been considered our pastoral heritage.

According to Michael Rosenthal, in his article 'Constable and Englishness', this is not a new interpretation; Constable, together with some critics of the day, thought of his paintings as representing the 'landscape of nation'.⁷ To reiterate his point he quotes at length a letter Constable sent to his friend John Fisher (I quote only a small fragment here): 'I was born to paint a happier land, my own dear England'. He painted the scenes, the air, the colour, and even in the application of his paint, Rosenthal claims, there is an evocation of an 'Englishness that lies within its rural core'.⁸ He goes on to write that the very subject matter itself is an expression of Constable's Englishness, symbolised by the equilibrium between nature and the man-made landscape.⁹ This is, to my mind, to slightly miss the point and importance of Constable. Constable's 'Englishness' was in the unacknowledged landscape of the everyday, in the quiet, familiar paintings of lived experience. And in his six-foot canvasses, where he makes the ordinary monumental, he anticipates certain aspects of Western contemporary photography by almost two hundred years. For me, as an artist working with the landscape, that is his enduring significance and continued relevance. My work has for over the last twenty years operated in this orbit of Constable and associated landscape painting. While my

⁴ Quoted in MANDLER, 1992, p. 464.

⁵ MATLESS, 2016, pp. 83-84.

⁶ Anon. 'Way clear for pylons to blot the landscape', *The Times*, Saturday 2 April 2011. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/way-clear-for-pylons-to-blot-the-landscape-gcwccntvp2r> [date accessed 25 July 2022].

⁷ ROSENTHAL, Michael. 'Constable and Englishness', *The British Art Journal*, Winter 2006/7, Vol. 7, No. 3, p. 40.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

photography does not look to challenge or further this tradition, by way of association it represents a contemporary interpretation of it through depicting topographical scenes that can be viewed within the context of English landscape painting.

Susan Sontag wrote: 'To remember is, more and more, not to recall a story but to be able to call up a picture'.¹⁰ The pictures which I have recalled in my ongoing visual enquiry are all made using photography. The world I frame within the boundaries of my camera's viewing screen makes visual my connections to spaces with a fidelity that I can only articulate through photography. It is a medium I feel I have a particular history with, as my father was a professional photographer and, as a teenager, I grew up in the familiar presence of his Leica's and Linhof's. However, my relationship with photography is a complex one and the landscape photographers I look to are few and have not informed my practice intellectually to any substantial degree. I have always felt that my work has a closer affinity with the protracted immersion found in the work of painters and writers, as opposed to the work of many photographers. My pictures are not connected to the photographic moment, rather, the accumulation of moments, made over years, found in the locations and objects I photograph. There is, therefore, very little discussion on either contemporary photographers or photography, within this body of research. P.H. Emerson provides an interesting 19th century context to my practice, however, modern day practitioners, and their influence on my pictures, remains largely concerned with certain stylistic considerations that emerged from the Düsseldorf school of 'objective' photography in the mid to late 1980s. The restrained colour palette of these photographers' images (Axel Hütte, Thomas Struth, Andreas Gursky and Thomas Ruff, for example), made under muted skies and printed as large-scale colour prints, held sway in my work for a number of years, but has faded gradually over the course of time and with each body of work.

The aim of this text is to provide both a scholarly context for and reflections on my continuous visual enquiry into the landscape of East Anglia. In order to do this, it addresses four distinct bodies of work. Each represents a significant period of artistic production and explores visual correspondences in addition to aesthetic and conceptual developments. The text is illustrated throughout and individual images from each portfolio can be cross-referenced with the digital portfolios as indicated.

¹⁰ SONTAG, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*, London, Penguin Books, 2003, p. 80.

Started in 1999 and continued in 2004, *What Has Been Gathered Will Disperse*, represents a small family garden that belonged to the naturalist Ted Ellis and his wife, Phyllis. *On the Edge of the Murmur of Things Divine* was begun in 2004 and continued in 2013 and 2020. These large-scale photographs depict roadside embankments and their peripheral landscapes, what are referred to as 'edgelands'. *The View from Here*, begun in 2009, explores the theoretical and aesthetic framework for a body of work which was commissioned to reflect Gainsborough's practice. And the last chapter is *Countless Edens*, which was made over the course of three years (2015-2018) in the house and garden of the writer Ronald Blythe, formally owned by the painter John Nash. The Epilogue, discusses a body of work *The Songs That Saints Sing Have No Ending* and outlines the current trajectory of the work and its context within my practice more broadly.

Chapter one: *What Has Been Gathered Will Disperse.* (Portfolio ref: 1.1 – 1.13)

This series of pictures was made in the private family garden of the naturalist Ted Ellis at Wheatfen, Surlingham, Norfolk. Ellis was a self-taught naturalist and academic. Specialising on the ecology of the Norfolk Broads and with Micro and Rust fungi being a particular area of interest, he discovered a variety of new species. His research was published in a range of publications and academic papers.¹¹ After his death in 1986 the garden was tended and maintained by his widow Phyllis Ellis with the help of the family. I moved to Norfolk in 1998 and discovered the garden later that year. Beyond the porous borders of the garden is Wheatfen Nature Reserve, situated on the edge of the Norfolk Broads. I made two pictures of the garden in 1999; they were the first photographs I had made after moving to Norwich. I returned to photograph again four years later having been recommended for an exhibition at the Garden Museum (London) by the then Senior Curator of Photography at the V&A, Mark Haworth-Booth. For a year I spent all my spare time walking, looking, thinking and occasionally taking photographs in the garden. The result was a body of eight 20" x 24" colour prints presented as a book. (fig 3. Portfolio ref: 1.1 – 1.8) Measuring almost two meters in length, this was a practical solution as the museum could not hang work on their walls. It was also a conceptual acknowledgment of Ted Ellis as a scholar.

During the making of this work I became interested in the literature and painting which used the landscape as a mediator between different temporal registers. The past coalescing with the present on a single page or canvas. Considering this coexistence in Constable's paintings, Ronald Paulson summarises it as the 'conception of landscape between past and present, memory and description, connotation and denotation, subjective and objective, evocation and representation'.¹² He identifies a duality: 'the closed-eye image of the past and what it is before the eyes now in clear focus'.¹³ This correlation between the landscape and memory, the present and the past cohabiting, was an important aspect in developing an understanding of my practice.

Wheatfen is situated close to Surlingham Broad on the River Yare. Ellis played a major role in developing our understanding of the ecology and history of the Norfolk Broads and fought for their protection. Much of this knowledge still contributes to our current understanding of them. From the 1920s onwards, there was a growing body of naturalists that argued for the need to protect and preserve the Broads from increasing levels of tourism and activities such

¹¹ SIMPSON, F.W. 'Obituaries: Edward Augustine Ellis (1909-1986)', *Watsonia*, 17, 1998, p. 115.

¹² PAULSON, Ronald. *Literary Landscape: Turner and Constable*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1982, p. 120.

¹³ *Ibid.*

as shooting. Established in 1926, the Norfolk Naturalists' Trust (NNT) soon became the Broads' active caretaker, managing them through acquisition and an ethos of, to use Matless's phrase, 'enlightened care'.¹⁴ Ellis was a prominent figure in championing the preservation of the Broads and in more general terms the natural habitat of Norfolk. He was an active member of the trust (NNT), in addition to editing the Norwich and Norfolk Naturalists' Society journal, becoming their president in 1953. He wrote a daily nature column for the *Eastern Daily Press*, 'In the Country', in addition to contributing to numerous radio and television broadcasts. In 1928 he took up the position of Keeper of Natural History at Norwich Castle retiring in 1956 to concentrate on his morphological studies.¹⁵ He lived at the cottage at Wheatfen from 1946 until his death.

The garden at Wheatfen follows a traditional model of an English kitchen garden, enclosed by hedgerow and fencing and designed around functionality with little consideration given to aesthetics.¹⁶ The original 17th-century design of the English cottage garden was demarcated into separate areas with specific roles, women attending the vegetables and flowers and the man the orchard. In a somewhat anachronistic fashion this was replicated at Wheatfen with the division of the garden into 'Ted's' and 'Phyllis's' halves, his more wooded with fruit trees and the other given over to vegetables.¹⁷ This segmenting of the garden is now barely discernable, marked only by the boundary of a small, now blocked-up and overgrown ditch, now integrated into the landscape as opposed to segmenting it. Ornamental carpets, given by a Buddhist centre situated close to the cottage, used for keeping weeds at bay and for collecting fallen fruit, became interwoven with the garden's earth and plants. What should have looked like jarring anomalies seemed subdued by years of exposure to climatic conditions, becoming an almost natural part of its pedology. (fig 4. Portfolio ref: 1.1, 1.2, 1.4) And cut paths crisscrossed the garden leading to rare black poplars, vegetable patches, an overgrown plot or nowhere in particular. (Portfolio ref: 1.5) The garden also functioned as a place of convergence where family members met and worked together. This brought a rhythm and sense of continuity to the garden, and with it a sense of assurance in nature's cycles.

Living close to Surlingham, walking the nature reserve was, for me, an almost daily activity. To reach the reserve one needs to pass by the side of the garden and it was there, after about a year of walking past it, that I started to slowly become aware of something familiar, a 'sense' of unconscious recollections, rather than any Proustian involuntary memory. It had the

¹⁴ MATLESS, David. 'Moral Geography in Broadland', *Ecumene*, April 1994, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 140-1.

¹⁵ MATLESS, David. 'Original Theories: Science and the Currency of the Local', *Cultural Geographies*, July 2003, Vol. 10, No. 3, p. 356.

¹⁶ CLARKE, Ethne. 'The English Cottage Garden', *Australian Garden History*, March/April 1994, Vol. 5, No. 5, p. 5.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

attributes of a *déjà vu*, an uncanny recognition revealed by the primacy of repeated visits and with that a growing conversancy. This was the first time I had returned to a particular space over an extended period of time, although what my latent 'sense' of this garden was, remained obscure. Based on what Yi-Fu Tuan describes as a 'subconscious kind of knowing', and with the permission and encouragement of the family, I made my initial images in the garden; one an overview and the other of its corner where the trees demarcating the edge of the garden were lit by the fading afternoon winter sun. (Portfolio ref: 1.7)¹⁸

During this time a photographer lent me *The Rings of Saturn* by W.G. Sebald. Within the book every picture which accompanied the text had been erased with a black felt tip pen in a case of seemingly furious redaction, resulting in pages which resembled a palimpsestic manuscript. The images were therefore only barely discernable on the pages' reverse. Faint under the text, they seemed to act as an unintentional metaphor for the layers and mirages from the past, and their recovery, that run through Sebald's prose. Daniel Weston in his paper, 'The Spatial Supplement: Landscape and Perspective in W. G. Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn*', examines this concurrency in Sebald's text, the function of the landscape as an interstate between the tangible and the incorporeal, a 'springboard for extended mental departures', a personal and universal historiography.¹⁹ It was this multitextured approach, Sebald's ability to 'enact improbable connections across space-time' that was seemingly congruent with my experiences in that particular garden.²⁰ These are moments of what Wylie describes as 'temporal turmoil' where the past and the present co-exist.²¹ For Sebald walking was the means of transference between these states, 'the figure of the flâneur', writes Sven Birkerts, 'the wandering observer who confronts the chaos of the modern world as if it were a labyrinth that only he can penetrate'.²² Walking around the garden at Wheatfen was to see it in parallax; one lens a physical manifestation of the Ellis family's connection to nature, their 'muscular consciousness', to use Tim Ingold's phrase: the constant activity of cutting pathways through the grass, turning ground over, attending to the vegetable plots and fruit trees, the physical maintenance of the garden designed to produce; the second lens, my engagement with it: pictures which represent a personal form of re-remembering, an unconscious affiliation with

¹⁸ TUAN, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, Minnesota, University of Minnesota Press, 1979, p. 184.

¹⁹ WESTON, Daniel. 'The Spatial Supplement: Landscape and Perspective in W.G. Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn*', *Cultural Geographies*, April 2011, Vol. 18, No. 2, p.175.

²⁰ KOCHHAR-LINDGREN, Gray. 'Charcoal: The Phantom Traces of W.G. Sebald's Novel-Memoirs', *Monatshefte*, Fall 2002, Vol. 94, No. 3, p. 368.

²¹ WYLIE, John. 'The Spectral Geographies of W.G. Sebald', *Cultural Geographies*, April 2007, Vol. 14, No. 2, p. 176.

²² BIRKERTS, Sven. 'Walter Benjamin, Flâneur: A Flanerie', *The Iowa Review*, Spring 1982, Vol. 13, No. 3/4, p. 164.

certain areas and aspects of the garden²³. Each image is a construction of this dualism, the 'distracted optics' of the wanderer, as Wylie describes it.²⁴

The activity of walking is present in Constable's work and I became increasingly aware of the significance of his practice of returning, repeating and recovery. He made all of his Stour Valley work within a small radius of around two by six miles. His biographer Charles Leslie wrote that he worked 'within the narrowest bounds in which, perhaps, the studies of an artist were ever confined', but his aim could 'be best attained by a constant study of the same objects under every change of the seasons'.²⁵ Navigating within the small circumference of his experience brought for Constable an awareness of the landscape through familiarity. He wrote to his fiancée, Maria Bicknell, that nature revealed itself to him, as if making a study of a landscape was a process of mutual consent.²⁶ Constable's landscape of the Stour Valley was a place, as Andrew Blaikie describes, 'where ordinariness prevails'. However, the ordinary, if unrecorded, fades, resulting in what Keough and Culhane describe as an 'opaqueness of memory'.²⁷ Constable's sketchbooks and *plein air* oil sketches were the storage mechanism for these memories, the sketch 'his immediate response to the landscape', which combined both topographical representation 'and the emotions aroused by it' writes Ann Bermingham.²⁸ He referred to the sketchbooks as his 'journals' and they have in Bermingham's opinion the qualities of 'autobiography'.²⁹ These sketches constituted for Constable a repository of material that could be recovered, sometimes over twenty years later, 'in tranquillity' as he described it, in his London studio.³⁰ This time lag became an intrinsic part of his working method and visual methodology. It was a process, writes Paulson, in which 'Constable was trying to recapture and represent an experience'. His sketches were the mechanism for this retrieval, an archive of past moments 'caught from fleeting time' as Constable described them.³¹ The accumulation of these childhood moments were incorporated into landscapes which delineated a collage of particular locations, experiences, and atmospheric conditions, an attempt, Paulson concludes, 'to recover something from the past'.³²

²³ INGOLD, Tim. 'The Temporality of the Landscape', *World Archaeology*, October 1993, Vol. 25, No. 2, 'Conceptions of Time and Ancient Society', p. 167.

²⁴ WYLIE, 2007, p. 177.

²⁵ LESLIE, C.R. *Memoirs of the Life of John Constable*, London, Phaidon Press Limited, 1995 (first edition 1951), p. 245.

²⁶ Quoted in PAULSON, 1982, p. 128.

²⁷ KEOUGH, Willeen & CULHANE, Dara. 'Landscapes: Places of Memory, Subversive Spaces, and Boundary Crossings', *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 1, 2015, p. 41.

²⁸ BERMINGHAM, Ann. *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1860*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1986, p. 128.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

³⁰ PAULSON, 1982, p. 119.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 119.

This is territory that Paulson has entered by re-evaluating Constable within the framework of psychoanalysis and Freud's theory of 'representation' in particular. He encourages us to read Constable's work within the context of Freud's dream and reality principles. Within this framework the unconscious, the suppressed memories, are represented visually, what Freud refers to as the 'dream-principle'. Its subsequent analysis, and reworkings, a 'secondary process', constitute the 'reality-principle'. Paulson argues that both concepts should be considered together when reassessing Constable's later paintings (the 'six footers' onwards). Freud's dream element, which in this case represents Constable's unconscious, is the landscape, its compositional architecture and the gestural marks on the canvas. The second state includes all subsequent thought process, alterations (subtractions and additions), Constable's thoughts on the work, expressed through lectures, texts and letters on his works. All of which help us decipher, Paulson claims, the picture's latent meaning.³³ This holistic reading of Constable's later works I would argue should be extended to include the initial pencil and *plein air* sketches, both of which constitute what Paulson considers the binary elements, the 'reality' of the landscape.³⁴

Given that through Freud's dream analogy, Constable's paintings represent the dualism of the unconscious and its reality, this chapter represents my initial attempts at a 'second state' revision of the series. The images I made there in 2004 represent a developing understanding of the inherent latency of memory in my work: a form of recovery brought about by the affectivity of place and the tropes of presence and absence. The cues for this memory retrieval within this series was the garden itself and elements within it. It re-established an attachment to two adjoining gardens of which I have no photographs; a garden and allotment in my grandparents' home, where I lived during my early formative years. These were my first recollections of a landscape. One of the gardens was communal, shared by a small row of terraced houses of which my grandparents was one. It appeared, at first glance, like a piece of overgrown and neglected land. Its function was demarcated by a washing line attached to a wooden fence at one end, a metal pole at the other and secured into the ground by an un-ceremonial slab of concrete. Pathways of trampled down grass from each house criss-crossed and led down to the line. There were no flowers or trees in this part of the garden. Beyond the garden, was my grandfather's wooden garage and further still, his allotment; a place of order and endeavour. Passing through the wooden gate, into what seemed an enchanted place of vegetables, flowers and wood-smoke, is something I still dream about. It is these two gardens which find their way in to my pictures.

³³ Ibid., pp. 168-9.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 168.

Re-assessing the images recently, eighteen years after making them, resulted in expanding the series with an additional five pictures also taken at the time, in 2004. (Portfolio ref: 1.9 – 1.12) Viewed holistically the series is a product of 'more than one state of mind', as Constable remarked when writing about the length of time between his sketches and the finished canvas.³⁵

³⁵ Ibid., p. 128.

Chapter two: *On the Edge of the Murmur of Things Divine* (Portfolio ref: 2.1 – 2.22)

On the Edge of the Murmur of Things Divine started in 2004 and was continued in 2013 and 2020. These phases of work predominately studied similar motifs: roadside embankments, landscape architecture and urban fringe landscapes. The body of pictures which started in 2004, overlapped with the photographs I was making for *What Has Been Gathered Will Disperse*. The latter was imbued with memory, presence and absence and the intimacy of a private family garden, while the former concerns an unspecified landscape seemingly devoid of narrative, history and intentionally prosaic. (fig 5. Portfolio ref: 2.7)

The first set of images for *On the Edge of the Murmur of Things Divine* built on my ongoing enquiry into the everyday and overlooked landscape. This set of photographs did, however, mark a significant departure from landscapes based on personal associations. The landscape along the edges of roads seemed generic and far removed from the general understanding of 'landscape'. An important facet of this research was English Nature's 1994 report into certain landscapes, and in particular, the 'urban fringe' and their role within the broader context of accessible 'nature'.³⁶

The second phase of images was directly informed by the new nature writing's attentiveness to peripheral landscapes. In my images there was a similar sensibility in the observation of the overlooked to Richard Mabey's *The Unofficial Countryside*, a personal identification with his interests in the outlying landscapes of our cities.³⁷ The type of landscape I was photographing also related to Marc Augé's theory of 'Non-Places'.³⁸ Much of what is classed as new nature writing, despite the heterogeneity of the landscape, is invested with the primacy of encountering, scrutiny, and recording, all mediated through the action of walking. More empirical than nomothetic, these short essays, or books, entwine the personal narrative with history, ecology, geopolitics and ethnography. The 'nature' they were observing and immersed in bore some similarities with the 'ordinary' and disregarded landscapes I found on the edges of roads. Writing in 'Theologies of the Wild: Contemporary Landscape Writing', Neal Alexander acknowledges the writer's orientation towards the mundane describing it as 'an ethics of noticing that seeks to make visible that which often goes unseen and unrecorded'.³⁹

³⁶ ROHDE, C.L.E. & KENDLE, A.D. 'Human well-being, natural landscapes and wildlife in urban areas. A review', *English Nature*, 1994.

³⁷ MABEY, Richard. *The Unofficial Countryside*, Stanbridge, Little Toller Books, 2010 (first edition 1973).

³⁸ AUGÉ, Marc. *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*, London, Verso Books, 2008 (first edition 1995).

³⁹ ALEXANDER, Neal. 'Theologies of the Wild: Contemporary Landscape Writing', *Journal of Modern Literature*, Summer 2015, Vol. 38, No. 4, p. 10.

In each of the three phases, the pictures are made within a short distance of each other on roads I frequently travelled, half glimpsed through a car window whilst driving from one destination to another. Nanna Verhoeff equates the car windscreen to the camera's frame or the cinema screen, a 'portal' to an image of the landscape viewed in transit.⁴⁰ Marc Augé, writing in *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*, makes a similar point when considering the passive perception of the passing landscape: 'travel constructs a fictional relationship between gaze and landscape'; 'there are spaces in which the individual feels himself to be a spectator without paying much attention to the spectacle'.⁴¹ The sensory perception of the landscape from the perspective of a moving vehicle, 'the mobile gaze', is an area that has preoccupied landscape designers, academics, philosophers, writers and engineers since pre-war Britain and continues to inform government policy on roadside landscaping to this day.⁴²

The Ministry of Transport's Roads Beautifying Association (RBA) was responsible during the interwar years for designing the planting schemes for the nation's roads. These schemes had two purposes: to blend the road into the broader landscape and to retain a sense of each locality's individuality. This philosophy was based on the methodology seen in the German autobahns constructed in the early 1930s where autochthonous roadside planting was undertaken in order to retain a sense of regionality.⁴³ Indeed some of the language used in this country bore a similar tone to that used in Nazi Germany in advocating the use of 'virgin soil and turf', beauty from order and the non-use of 'foreign' species in the construction of roadside verges.⁴⁴ This was a dialogue which brought together 'exclusionary nationalist political ideologies with debates about landscape, ecology and race' writes Merriman.⁴⁵ The RBA however endured criticism for basing their roadside landscape and planting designs on the English pastoral tradition, even citing a John Crome watercolour (*The Shadowed Road* c. 1808-10) as an aesthetic model.⁴⁶ This is, according to Matless, 'hiding modernity under a bush rather than embracing a modern functional aesthetic'.⁴⁷ Matless, in his book *Landscape and Englishness*, goes on to clearly articulate the growing pains of a country emerging from

⁴⁰ VERHOEFF, Nanna. *Mobile Screens: The Visual Regime of Navigation*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2012, p. 48.

⁴¹ AUGÉ, 2008, pp. 69-70.

⁴² MERRIMAN, Peter. 'A New Look at the English Landscape: Landscape Architecture, Movement and the Aesthetics of Motorways in Early Postwar Britain', *Cultural Geographies*, January 2006, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp. 78-105.

⁴³ LAW OLMSTED, Frederick. 'Roadside Planting on Hitler Highways: An Inquiry from Germany and an American Answer', *Landscape Architecture Magazine*, July 1940, Vol. 30, No. 4, p. 179.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 97, p. 92.

⁴⁵ MERRIMAN, 2006, p. 88.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁴⁷ MATLESS, 2016, p. 87.

the 19th-century into the 20th. The Institute of Landscape Architects argued that these static views gave no consideration to a landscape perceived at speed and advocated the need for an awareness of experiencing the landscape from a moving car, a form of visual kinaesthesia.⁴⁹ An equilibrium was required between 'the landscape of speed', and the 'landscape of nature'.⁵⁰ This Francine Houben later referred to as 'the aesthetics of mobility'.⁵¹

When considering the automotive experience of these landscapes, Augé writes: 'of course the fact is that most of those who pass by do not stop; but they may pass by again, every summer or several times a year, so that an abstract space can become strangely familiar to them over time'.⁵² One day, however, after much thought, I did stop. The 'familiar' landscape seen and sensed in motion became the unfamiliar when viewed as stationary. The Roads Beautifying Association's model of the static pastoral had come full circle with respect to my images containing all the component parts of the Crome, freezing the moving image into the still. And if the act of rushing through the landscape prevents the traveller being 'present' in the landscape, as Augé claims, through the camera's ground-glass I was fully immersed in it.⁵³ In the first phase of images I made a set of pictures of roadside embankments where each composition was identical to the next with every element of the image; road, kerb, verge and planted embankment, stretching horizontally across the picture plane. (Portfolio ref: 2.1 – 2.8) The second set of images in this first phase were made further away from the road and concentrated on the landscapes around the architecture of flyovers. The areas around them were unremarkable, with some showing a similar vernacular planting rationale to the embankments, while others grew and expanded naturally. (Portfolio ref: 2.9 – 2.17)

It felt like new territory and yet its origins lay in the planting rationale of the mid 1920s, and their design, construction and landscaping to the embankments that flanked part of the country's first motorway, the M1.⁵⁴ In a time of post-war growing economic confidence, car ownership expanded and car journeys were seen as exciting forms of travel. To meet the increasing demand for these journeys the nation's road infrastructure was also in a period of post-austerity re-development. The M1 presented landscape designers with an opportunity to integrate a modern roadway system within the context of the landscape, a key objective of its design. A facet of this construction were the embankments that flanked sections of the motorway, blocking what were deemed unsightly views and guiding the driver through the

⁴⁹ MERRIMAN, 2006, pp. 82-8.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 91.

⁵¹ Quoted in VERHOEFF, 2012, p. 27.

⁵² AUGÉ, 2008, p. 79.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 68.

⁵⁴ MATLESS, 2016, pp. 84-93.

landscape. By 1959 however, the design and construction of the embankments had already come under criticism for being too angular, as opposed to the German model with its smoother contours, blending them in with the surrounding landscape with greater modulation. British landscape designers set about correcting this through a planting schema that integrated the embankments into the regional topography to a greater degree. This cultivated landscape changed and matured over time and by the 1970s scientists were acknowledging their environmental worth.⁵⁵ The ecological attributes of today's roadside embankments are recognised and embodied in the policies of Highways England, and in the Government's Road Investment Strategy.⁵⁶ These formal screens, earthworks comprising of indigenous planting (thus also encouraging native wildlife) are built as a visual mask and sonic baffle, replacing the view of a road and subduing its ambient noise, with the aim of maintaining a sense of its vernacular topography. In what Nanna Verhoeff describes as the 'panoramic pollution of the horizon', each new road network segments and compartmentalizes the landscape. The screens are an attempt at recovering, or salvaging, some of the landscapes regional characteristics.⁵⁷ With this creeping loss of the landscape, embankments demarcate new boundaries reminiscent of the hedgerows of the enclosures while the urban fringe is an echo of the enclosed fields. The new topography becomes 'the antithesis of the places of memory'.⁵⁸

It was Marion Shoard who first used the phrase in her 2002 essay 'Edgelands' for the urban fringe in the book Jennifer Jenkins edited, *In Remaking the Landscape*.⁵⁹ It's Victor Hugo's 'terrain vague'. An 'untranslated landscape', write Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts, the peripheral unacknowledged landscape of a journey.⁶⁰ Writing in 'An Arena of Conflict: The Green Belt Debate in the 21st Century', Peter Bishop, Professor of Urban Design at the Bartlett School of Architecture, recognises the importance of such peripheral spaces. Whilst his report is orientated around the dialectic of geopolitical and environmental arguments, he acknowledges that these outlying landscapes have a resonance with contemporary landscape writers, transforming the ecological landscape into the cultural.⁶¹

⁵⁵ MERRIMAN, 2006, pp. 89-92.

⁵⁶ Anon. 'Our plan to protect and increase biodiversity', *Highways England*, June 2015, pp. 1-28.

<https://nationalhighways.co.uk/media/yp1cj1kf/biodiversity-plan.pdf>. [date accessed 27 April 2022].

Anon. 'Strategic Road Network Initial Report', *Highways England*, December 2017, p. 19.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/666884/Highways_England_Strategic_Road_Network_Initial_Report_-_WEB.pdf [date accessed 2 May 2022].

⁵⁷ VERHOEFF, 2012, p. 27.

⁵⁸ AUGÉ, 2008, p. 5.

⁵⁹ JENKINS, Jennifer (ed). *In Remaking the Landscape*, London, Profile Books, 2002, pp. 117-46.

⁶⁰ FARLEY, Paul & SYMMONS ROBERTS, Michael. *Edgelands; Journeys into England's True Wilderness*, London, Vintage Books, 2012, p. 5.

⁶¹ BISHOP, Peter. 'An Arena of Conflict: The Green Belt Debate in the 21st Century', p. 95. In BISHOP, Peter, PEREZ, Alona Martinez, ROGGEMA, Rob, WILLIAMS, Lesley. *Repurposing the Green Belt in the 21st Century*, London, UCL Press, 2020, pp. 77-118.

Matthew Gandy, who describes these landscapes as 'marginalia', examines the heterogeneity of discourse (Gandy refers to it as a 'counter discourse') around the urban fringe through broadening his dialogue across both cultural and ecological disciplines.⁶² While Gandy's research around the urban fringe is expansive, his classification of what constitutes it is focused primarily on areas of wasteland. These often brownfield sites becoming an alternative 'wilderness' of ecology and biodiversity, he claims. Describing these sites as places of 'self-discovery' for the artist, Gandy outlines the aesthetic of 'non-design', the leitmotif of 'spontaneous urban nature' found in much contemporary nature writing.⁶³

This was the landscape Richard Mabey encountered and which provided the substance for his book, *The Unofficial Countryside* (this was the book which was among the first to develop the new sensibility to the marginal). First published in 1973, the book provides a personal account of 'landscapes' caught between abandonment and redevelopment on the outer edges of cities. Gandy makes the claim that this book challenged perceptions of the landscape through a combination of both empirical and bionomic investigations, while negotiating the opposing terrains of 'narrow scientism' and the 'neo-romanticist' interpretations of the urban landscape.⁶⁴ I disagree with Gandy on this second point. Mabey, in writing about his encounters with the wastelands of outer London often strikes a post-apocalyptic note with his descriptions of an abandoned urban landscape where only ecological resilience retrieves it as a place of interest. What cannot be disputed, however, is that this 'edgeland' is evoked in a language that challenges the pre-conceived notions of what constitutes 'landscape'. As Neal Alexander remarks: 'many examples of contemporary landscape writing exhibit a laudable determination to revalue and explore ordinary landscapes and everyday habitats, often explicitly denigrating purist conceptions of natural landscapes as wilderness'.⁶⁵ In removing any nostalgic filter connected to 'landscape', and in swapping the sublime for the semi-subtopian, Mabey offers 'no immediate pastoral comfort'.⁶⁶

The second set of pictures, started in 2013, were made as an extension to the work begun in 2004 and reflected the literary interests in such environments. The 'landscape' of the embankments had matured and the fencing which had become part of its architecture bore the signs of elapsed time. (fig. 6 Portfolio ref: 2.18 - 2.21) This developed the narrative structure within each picture. Up to this point the series title had been *Stories Yet to Be Told*,

⁶² GANDY, Matthew. 'Marginalia: Aesthetics, Ecology, and Urban Wastelands', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, November 2013, Vol. 103, No. 6, pp. 1301-2.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 1305.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 1301.

⁶⁵ ALEXANDER, 2015, p. 17.

⁶⁶ DANIELS, Stephen & LORIMER, Hayden. 'Editorial: Until the End of Days: Narrating Landscape and Environment', *Cultural Geographies*, January 2012, Vol. 19, No. 1, p. 5.

alluding to a virgin landscape, but which now felt inaccurate. It was therefore replaced by a line from Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* where he describes a landscape merging from the rural into the urban. This reflected with greater fidelity the importance of new nature writing on my imagery and the type of landscape, I was recording.

The final picture, made in 2020, is a combination of an embankment and urban fringe landscape. On the edge of a building development was a large mound of piled earth which took on the formal characteristics of an embankment. Over time the inert plant life of the soil had flourished into a steep field of wild flowers. Fenced off and left, it had become a symbol of the urban fringe. (Portfolio ref: 2.22.)

In Farley and Roberts's book, *Edgelands: Journeys into England's True Wilderness*, they write about twenty-eight different 'edgeland' landscapes, yet roadside embankments are not amongst them. They are the marginalised amongst the marginalised. The geographer Yi-Fu Tuan referred to unpleasant places as eliciting 'Topophobia', but the roadside embankments seem to produce more indifference than aversion. Perhaps they are neither one thing nor the other, as in Augé's assessment: 'place and non-place are rather like opposed polarities: the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed; they are like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten'.⁶⁷

This is the only body of work which I have consciously extended over a period of time. It reflects the growing cultural interest in the peripheral landscapes found on what have become known as 'edgelands'. There is a history in the planting rationale of roadside ecologies from the mid-1920s onwards, with the German autobahns providing the ambitious model for the English designers. Emerging from a period of austerity, post-war Britain was undergoing a period of regeneration and this was never better illustrated than in the expansion of the road network, mirroring the national political consensus for what Matless describes as 'geographies of reconstruction'.⁶⁸ These are practices still reflected in current government policy and feed into broader narratives on landscape. Although not immediately obvious, the landscape encompasses elements of changing political orientations, from the unease of this country's admiring glances towards Germany in the mid 1930s, to post-austerity and through to today's broader national and global environmental consciousness. In the retention of a vernacular ecology these landscapes have become, and continue to be, culturally and scientifically significant. Each planted earthwork is often perceived in the peripheral vision of our journey,

⁶⁷ AUGÉ, 2008, p. 64.

⁶⁸ MATLESS, 2016, pp. 275-317.

overlooked and unconsidered as it passes by. This reflects the aesthetic and theoretical debates around the design of the roadside landscapes which have been a constant consideration for landscape designers from the 1940s onwards. Verhoeff's theory equates the windscreen to the cinema screen, where from the static position of a seat, cinema or vehicle, the moving image is perceived and experienced in a series of glances, extending the experience into a cinematic context.⁶⁹ Continuing this analogy, my pictures are the equivalent of the film still, static images which reference the pastoral landscape tradition of the Roads Beautification Scheme designs. In this sense they operate like Mabey's text in challenging the perception of what is meant by 'landscape'.

⁶⁹ VERHOEFF, 2012, p. 45.

Chapter three: *The View from Here* (Portfolio ref: 3.1 – 3.6)

In 2009 I was commissioned to make a new body of work to coincide with The Holburne Museum's (Bath) 2012 large retrospective of Gainsborough's landscapes (*Themes and Variations*). The remit of my project was that my photographs were to be informed by Gainsborough's landscapes in some respect. They were to be exhibited alongside his work, offering a contemporary context for landscape-based imagery. Most of Gainsborough's landscapes were constructed cerebrally and were not visual descriptions of a particular place. As an initial approach, it wasn't a feasible strategy to look for comparable landscapes. As a way of beginning, I at first used elements from his landscape compositions as visual and recognisable motifs within my photographs as a way of referencing his paintings. However, I found a more engaging line of enquiry in exploring 18th-century theories and discourses that had a direct bearing on his approach to making landscape pictures. This went some way to answering the question as to why his work was not an authentic representation of nature but rather based on a formulaic approach. This led me to examine theories on perception and the aesthetic experience and in particular the camera obscura as a metaphor for human vision and cognitive understanding. This was the starting point for my reflective commentary, as the camera obscura shares a natural affinity to the view camera and the visual experience of the projected image.

In one of our many conversations on Constable and my photographic practice, Michael Harrison (the late director of Kettle's Yard), repeatedly said "you have to look at Gainsborough". This commission offered me the chance to explore Gainsborough's work and continue my relationship with the English landscape tradition which I had been exploring for the previous twenty years. I was interested in studying the differences and similarities, if there were any, in making landscape pictures, spanning almost two hundred years. I was required to make my work in two of the locations most associated with Gainsborough's landscapes, East Anglia and Bath. I based my research around his rustic landscapes, avoiding the sentimental 'cottage door scenes' and 'fancy pictures' which defined the last decade of his life. These rustic landscapes, according to Ann Bermingham, are the pictures of the countryside that most closely express his relationship to it.⁷⁰

Gainsborough, although not the first, is acknowledged to be the painter who established the British tradition of landscape painting. He was the 'most important precursor of the picturesque and natural painting' claims Bermingham.⁷¹ I was aware of both Constable's letter,

⁷⁰ BERMINGHAM, 1986, p. 54.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 57.

where on a trip to Ipswich, he wrote that he saw Gainsborough in the hedgerows, and of his lecture on Gainsborough's landscapes where he was quoted as saying: 'on looking at them, we find tears in our eyes, and know not what brings them'.⁷²

Gainsborough made work in both the picturesque and rustic traditions. They seem at first like contradictory approaches and this has led to a certain amount of confusion in the reading of his work. The picturesque is a form of naturalism based on the close observation and aesthetic description of nature (a quality that Joshua Reynolds recognised in his 'Discourse XIV' describing Gainsborough's studies from nature as 'portrait like').⁷³ And, the rustic, differing from the traditional topographical approach with its fidelity to a specific and recognisable location, aiming instead to 'evoke the countryside and rural life'.⁷⁴ The landscape Gainsborough endeavoured to evoke was a 'Happy Britannia' where the poor co-existed in harmony with the rich, depicted through an increasingly imagined landscape.⁷⁵

A significant change to the political and topographical landscape happened within Gainsborough's lifetime. The enclosure acts, affecting Suffolk between 1727 and 1801, altered not only the physical shape of the landscape but also its social structures and hierarchical order. The loss of the landscape to all but a few landowners, and its impact on society, and the individual, was reflected in the poetry of George Crabbe and John Clare, for example. However, Gainsborough's landscapes remained somewhat neutral, 'ambiguous' according to Bermingham and 'skirt the question of ownership'.⁷⁶ Gainsborough seemingly went out of his way to avoid taking a political position in his work. He remains apolitical in his paintings of this new enclosed landscape which, through their compartmentalised structure, was neither explicitly accepted nor denied, only inferred in his paintings. If Gainsborough makes any statement about this new politically altered landscape, it is by making visual what has been lost, writes Bermingham.⁷⁷ Where we look for a visual equivalent of a Clare anti-enclosure poem, Gainsborough paints, claim Asfour and Williamson, a more pious landscape informed by his religious beliefs. They go on to attest that his populated landscapes represent allegorical pictures of our spiritual journey through life signified by the motif of the traveller through nature.⁷⁸ Both interpretations could be the equivalent of putting words into his mouth,

⁷² Quoted in SLOMAN, Susan. *Gainsborough's Landscapes: Themes and Variations*, London, Philip Wilson, 2011, p. 1.

⁷³ REYNOLDS, Joshua. *Discourses*, London, Seeley & Co. Limited, 1905, p. 382.

⁷⁴ BERMINGHAM, 1986, p. 10.

⁷⁵ BARRELL, John. *The Dark Side of the Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Painting 1730-1840*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980, p. 52.

⁷⁶ BERMINGHAM, 1986, pp. 40-1.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁷⁸ ASFOUR, Amal & WILLIAMSON, Paul. *Gainsborough's Vision*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 1999, p. 49.

but the political ambivalence of Gainsborough's pictures does seem to reveal, as Bermingham writes, that 'his nostalgia for the simple rural life may have exceeded the truth of that life'.⁷⁹

Gainsborough's paintings of 'Merry England' were often hybrids from his sketches, made from nature, and the application of what could be described as a landscape formula transcribed into three-dimensional model landscapes he constructed in his home, echoing the 18th-century's growing distrust of art's ability to represent nature.⁸⁰ His 'habit', claims Susan Sloman, of building these constructs was purely a compositional aid for a painting's preparatory sketches, not to copy just as they were but as a way of generating ideas; they were 'three-dimensional imaginative drawings'.⁸¹ Looking like small designs for the stage, they were set within boxes and included figures made out of wax in addition to broccoli, coal and mirrors, all acting as representative forms and scenes from nature. His figures were 'lay people', a painter's method of using models to represent people. (fig. 7) The 'scene' was lit by candle light as distributed and directed by slits in the side of the box.⁸² The resulting pictures have a duality, being both realistic and what Asfour and Williamson describe as appearing 'less tangible', exhibiting the qualities of what they refer to as 'invented naturalism'.⁸³

The Gainsborough I encountered at the start of the project seemed remote. His landscapes seemed as internally constructed as his three-dimensional models. As Bermingham writes, it was a world that was 'private and personal'.⁸⁴ Despite this, he made work infused with the theories, knowledge and understanding of the times. My six pictures attempted to represent different aspects of 18th-century art practice and endeavoured to embody some of the debates and discourses that informed the contemporary reasoning that Gainsborough's work fed into and came from. Although all my photographs had these elements, below I discuss just three of them.

Poringland, 2010 (fig 8. portfolio ref: 3.3), was made from an elevated viewpoint. It overlooks a landscape which is uncultivated and which shows the initial signs of urban development on the horizon. It also looks towards the site of Crome's *Poringland Oak* (c. 1818-20) which sits close to the row of houses towards the left-hand edge of the picture, an acknowledgment, on my part, of the tradition I was following.

⁷⁹ BERMINGHAM, 1986, p. 43.

⁸⁰ ASFOUR & WILLIAMSON, 1999, p. 175, pp. 55-6.

⁸¹ SLOMAN, 2011. pp. 8-9.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁸³ ASFOUR & WILLIAMSON, 1999, pp. 55-6.

⁸⁴ BERMINGHAM, 1986, p. 43.

Tyre tracks, reminiscent of Hogarth's curving 'line of beauty', guide the viewer through the picture and out towards the distant horizon, lines 'that lead[s] the eye a wanton kind of chace' wrote Hogarth in *The Analysis of Beauty* (1753).⁸⁵ A screen of trees towards the right-hand edge, a compositional device Gainsborough borrowed from Ruisdael, assists this passage through the picture, whilst the row of trees in the picture's mid-distance disrupt the eye's journey through the delineated space, functioning in the same way as many of Gainsborough's trees in 'delaying or actually frustrating its journey to the horizon'.⁸⁶ In addition, the screen acts as a mechanism in the structural design of the picture by containing the viewer's focus within the frame, a device found in both 17th-century Dutch landscape paintings and Gainsborough's. Through these elements I was alluding to a Gainsborough landscape, while subverting the pastoral with the mundane, a re-contextualising of the motifs and devices. After the initial exposure two men walked into the picture with their three dogs, which were running loose. The introduction of the figures was a moment of serendipity which immediately connected the picture with Gainsborough's landscapes to an even greater extent.

The popular Dutch painterly device of a figure meditating about the landscape while we viewers watch from an unobserved distance, was designed, according to Bermingham, to elicit a connection between the viewer and the landscape through what she describes as a 'sympathetic identification'.⁸⁷ Figures to Gainsborough were also interesting visual notes within the broader framework of the image. In a letter to William Jackson he wrote; 'do you really think that a regular Composition in the Landskip way should ever be fill'd with History, or any figures but such as fill a place (I won't say stop a gap) or to create a little business for the Eye to be drawn from the Trees in order to return to them with more glee'.⁸⁸ The figures are compositional devices that punctuate the design of a picture. Despite Gainsborough's comments, Asfour and Williamson suggest that Gainsborough's figures can be read in direct reference to the 18th-century preoccupation with moralism, epitomised in the emblem prints of that time. Given the schematic nature of his landscapes, it is perhaps tempting to impose these interpretations onto his figures in this way. They are, they claim, 'as much moral beings as decorative gap-fillers'.⁸⁹ Rather than compositional aids, they can be interpreted as allegorical insertions which emphasise the 'connection between God, man, and nature'.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Quoted in ASFOUR & WILLIAMSON, 1999, p. 175, p. 77.

⁸⁶ See BERMINGHAM, 1986, p. 165, p. 35.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁸⁸ Quoted in ASFOUR & WILLIAMSON, 1999, p. 32.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein wrote: 'Nothing could be more remarkable than seeing someone who thinks himself unobserved engaged in some quite simple everyday activity'.⁹¹ The figures in *Poringland* merit some discussion around the concept of absorption. Michael Fried has written extensively on the subject of absorption in both painting (predominantly 18th-century French painting) and contemporary photography, with a particular focus on the Canadian photographer Jeff Wall. In his paper, 'Jeff Wall, Wittgenstein, and the Everyday', Fried quotes Wall discussing the modes of these images; 'in absorptive pictures, we are looking at figures who appear not to be 'acting out' their world, only 'being in' it', a quality Fried refers to as 'antitheatrical'.⁹² Absorbed figures are so engrossed in their activity that they are unaware of their surroundings or the fact that they are being observed.⁹³ The figures in my picture are not involved in any practical activity nor are they so absorbed that they are not aware of their environment. However, they are unaware of the photographer's presence scrutinising them from a distance. Their absorption in the landscape is also duplicated by the photographer. Fried argues that a finished painting is an archive of a painter's immersive engagement, 'the product' of the artist's absorption. By definition, he argues, no photograph can fully replicate this sustained level of engagement given its fidelity to a given measure of, in comparison, shortened time.⁹⁴ While that may be strictly true, the immersive nature of using a 10 x 8 camera, the length of time it takes to set up, compose, focus, scrutinise the image through the camera's ground-glass (focusing screen) and contemplate an inverted world (there are no mirrors to re-orientate the image in a large format view camera) which is transcribed in exacting detail (and isolated by the use of a focusing cloth to eliminate the peripheral landscape), is perhaps the closest photography comes to the act of absorption in the production of an image. A final element of absorption is introduced with the viewer of the image. Adopting the position of the artist, the viewer becomes integrated into the scene; as Nanna Verhoeff writes, 'instead of remaining an onlooker, the viewer is invited to be present, as part of the scene depicted: the observer is offered some sort of immersion'.⁹⁵

The figures in *Poringland* deserve some discussion given that they are the only figures to populate any of my landscapes, although only occupying a small presence within the scale of the landscape. It was interesting to compare this image with the one I took before they walked into it. It is a very different photograph with a focus on a landscape that has been stripped back ready for development with just a few markers left of its pastoral past. With the inclusion

⁹¹ WITTGENSTEIN, Ludwig, WRIGHT, Georg von (ed), NYMAN, Heikki (ed), PICHLER, Alois (ed). *Culture and Value: A Selection from the Posthumous Remains*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1998, (first edition 1984), pp. 6e–7e.

⁹² FRIED, Michael. 'Jeff Wall, Wittgenstein, and the Everyday', *Critical Inquiry*, Spring 2007, Vol. 33, No. 3, p. 497, p. 525.

⁹³ FRIED, Michael. *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before*, London, Yale University Press, 2009, pp. 49-50.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁹⁵ VERHOEFF, 2012, p. 35.

of the two men, in what appears to be a conversation, through 'sympathetic identification', they become allegorical figures, representing the broader socio-political debates around environmentalism and the construction of new housing. Like Gainsborough's landscapes, any political position inferred by the artist remains ambiguous.

Garden (morning), Caistor St. Edmunds, 2009 (portfolio ref: 3.1) also incorporates the Hogarthian snaking line. It is perhaps the closest any of my pictures come to resembling what Asfour and Williamson perceive as the curvature in Gainsborough's compositions, almost discoidal in some instances they claim.⁹⁶ It is interesting to equate this way of 'seeing' with the circle of coverage projected by a camera's lens. I am not suggesting that Gainsborough used a camera obscura, even though we can assume he would have been aware of such a device through the artistic, scientific and philosophical climate which was developing theories of perception, not just as a representation of nature but on the intellectual understanding of its representation.

Descartes developed the 17th-century's philosophical dialogue on vision and perception with his theory that perceptiveness is as much cerebral as it is visual. He uses the camera obscura as a metaphor for the mechanics of this process, the aperture the eye and a stretched sheet onto which the image is projected, the mind. The camera obscura as an epistemological 'model for knowledge' is further developed by Locke and Leibniz.⁹⁷ Both extended the camera metaphor connecting observation with conscious thought, with a screen now replacing Descartes's stretched sheet as the nexus between vision and cognition.⁹⁸ The camera obscura as metaphor could be viewed as a precursor to Freud's essay, 'The Photographic Apparatus'. In his text, Freud uses the camera obscura as a symbol for our unconscious before introducing the camera and the photographic negative, thus extending the metaphor further through negative/positive, conscious/unconscious analogies. Both metaphors talk of a 'dark room' or antechamber. This has parallels with viewing the world under the dark focusing cloth of a view camera. Descartes's sheet and Leibniz's screen, on which the image is projected, and which represent perception and thought, are replaced with a view camera's gridded focusing screen, or ground glass.

This engagement with the ground glass and the enquiry into perception forms the basis of P.H. Emerson's seminal writing *Naturalist Photography for Students of the Art*. Published in 1889, it bridges the gap between the empirical and theoretical enquires of the 18th century

⁹⁶ ASFOUR & WILLIAMSON, 1999, pp. 163-4.

⁹⁷ IHDE, Don & SELINGER, Evan. 'Merleau-Ponty and Epistemology Engines', *Human Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 4, 2004, p. 365.

⁹⁸ OLSON, Michael J. 'The Camera Obscura and the Nature of the Soul: On a Tension between the Mechanics of Sensation and the Metaphysics of the Soul', *Intellectual History Review*, April 2014, p. 4.

and early modernist photography. Emerson formulated a type of photography that, he claimed, was 'naturalistic' which 'sought fidelity to the perceptual experience of ordinary life' writes Charles Palermo in his paper, 'The World in the Ground Glass: Transformations in P. H. Emerson's Photography'.⁹⁹ Through the new medium of photography Emerson furthered the 18th century investigations into the perception of objects and space. By focusing the camera's lens solely on the principal subject of the picture, leaving the peripheral elements of the picture out of focus, he aimed to replicate the functioning of the eye, its foveal vision. This was achieved by using specific focal length lenses. A 'longer' lens, in his opinion, replicated human vision with greater fidelity than a wide-angle lens, as this exaggerated the foreground and general pictorial space. Longer lenses, something Palermo fails to mention, also isolate the subject on which they are focused, resulting in the near and far elements of the image receding out of focus (shallow depth of field) to a greater degree than when using a wide-angle lens.¹⁰⁰

The 18th-century viewers of paintings were presumed to be persons of cultivated sensibility. They viewed a painting of the landscape not as an image rooted in a fidelity of nature but as a picture, a separate and cohesive entity, an artifice.¹⁰¹ In the 19th century, photography with its seeming exactitude in rendering the world before its lens cultivated and challenged this engagement with the image. The world was transcribed with exacting 'objectivity' onto the plate camera's screen, but remained an illusion. In his paper, Palermo reminds us of Emerson's experience of a mirage on Breydon Water, Norfolk, of how this vision appeared inverted and seemed to represent the upturned temporality of the world found on the camera's screen.¹⁰² Emerson wrote that the image on the ground glass 'gave him more aesthetic pleasure than the final photograph itself', and went on to say how he liked to share this new view of the world with people, who would stare in wonder, 'open mouthed' to use Emerson's term, at the faithful reproduction of the world on the camera's glass, the artists mind, to reference the 18th-century analogies with the camera obscura, vision and consciousness.¹⁰³

The interaction I have with the ground glass is no less magical. It is a screen where the responsive and unconscious minds collide to form an image on the glass. For those moments on the screen there is reciprocity between the empirical and the cognitive. There is no mirror, the modern photographic equivalent of human vestibular correction, to re-orientate the

⁹⁹ PALERMO, Charles. 'The World in the Ground Glass: Transformations in P. H. Emerson's Photography', *The Art Bulletin*, March 2007, Vol. 89, No. 1, p. 130.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ For a fuller analysis on the 18th century's enquiry into the nature of seeing and its representation in painting see ASFOUR & WILLIAMSON, 1999, pp. 163-197.

¹⁰² Emerson referred to this optical vision as a 'fairyland'. PALERMO, 2007, pp. 138-9.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 140.

inverted image from the lens. In this sense the world is abstracted. Hogarth's example of reading, where the eye scans and focuses on specific elements before merging each component into a cohesive whole, is replicated in the view camera by scrutinising singular elements within the frame with the use of a magnifying loupe.¹⁰⁴ The lens at the front can maneuver separately, both vertically and horizontally, from other elements of the camera. Using this vertical shift allows the photographer to control the placement of the horizon in the picture, somewhat echoing Gainsborough's friend William Jackson's deliberations on the placement of the horizon line in relationship to the viewer's eye.¹⁰⁵ Through a range of tilting, lateral and horizontal movements of the lens, the perspective, focus and rendering of spatial depth is articulated on the camera's screen, which becomes a repository of the photographer's thought processes, both on the ground glass and in the final image, a cognitive map. Film is held in a film holder which is inserted at the back, replacing the exact plane of the screen, becoming its material memory, Freud's conscious and unconscious. The photographer, now unable to look through the screen stands beside the camera, outside of himself, trusting the process to capture what was made visible on the ground glass (something Emerson felt the process could not achieve). If the screen represents the photographer's mind, the film his memory, it is somewhat akin to Gainsborough creating landscapes, as he wrote, in his 'own brain'.¹⁰⁶

The immersive visual experience of the camera obscura is also replicated in Gainsborough's 'Showbox' (fig. 9), a forerunner to the 1970s View Master stereoscope, one of my earliest visual experiences of landscapes. Now held as part of the V&A collection, Gainsborough's viewing mechanism was constructed in the 1780s as a device for showing his 'transparencies', landscapes painted onto glass. Viewed through an adjustable lens at the front the viewer had a choice of a number of different painted landscapes (only six remain, on the basis of preparatory drawings, it is assumed that others have been lost). A diffusing screen, made of silk, allowed the light emitted from three candles from behind the landscapes, to be distributed evenly. Lenses were held at the front of the mechanism and could be changed to alter the apparent viewing distance to the 'landscape'. The result was an aesthetic experience that captivated its audience, leading Edward Edwards to describe his experience in *Anecdotes of Painters who Have Resided Or Been Born in England* (1808), as being 'truly captivating'.¹⁰⁷ The 'Showbox' offered its singular viewer an intimate, empirical and cognitive experience. In her paper, 'Gainsborough's Show Box: Illusion and Special Effects in Eighteenth-Century

¹⁰⁴ ASFOUR & WILLIAMSON, 1999, p. 117.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 172.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 171.

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in WILSON, David. 'Thomas Gainsborough RA: Pastoral Pleasure and the Showbox', *The British Art Journal*, Winter 2007/8, Vol. 8, No. 3, p. 60.

Britain', Bermingham describes the viewers as entering into a 'private, self-enclosed world of imagination and fantasy'.¹⁰⁸

The painted glass slides, it could be argued, are a precursor of the camera's ground glass in the sense that an image sits on a glass screen and is illuminated from a light source. It is a reversed camera. The screen which holds the painted image, the product of the artist's imagination, is at the furthest end of the viewing box. The lenses, which normally face the subject, are at the mechanism's front and when moved closer to the eyes, or further away, altered the perception of depicted space, anticipating Emerson's use of lenses. Referring to Gainsborough's 'Showbox' as the camera obscura's 'cousin', Bermingham, too, draws parallels between the image on the glass and the metaphor of the human mind. In addition to these scientific and philosophical enquiries, she also considers it within the 18th-century's broader fascination with visual illusion.¹⁰⁹ Art and spectacle held a popular appeal in the 18th century. Painted transparencies on paper were a frequent source of entertainment for a growing number of the British populace. Normally viewed in small intimate gatherings, they were seen as a contemporary form of entertainment. And in wanting to humour his visitors, writes Frances Terpak, this is one of the reasons Gainsborough originally constructed his 'Showbox'. Given the influence on him of Thomas Jervis's paintings on glass, Gainsborough's decision to construct his viewing mechanism was also based on not only social fashions but aesthetic considerations.¹¹⁰ In his fourteenth *Discourse*, Joshua Reynolds talks about Gainsborough's practice of painting by candlelight.¹¹¹ It doesn't seem too much of a leap for Gainsborough to evolve from using this source of light for painting by, to the sole source of his landscapes painted on glass. Writing in *The British Art Journal*, Andreas Petzold discusses how Gainsborough's interest in painting on glass was largely based on the characteristics of 'enhanced light and atmospheric effects'.¹¹² These backlit transparencies offered possibilities in luminosity and plays of light which were not achievable through painting on to a non-transparent canvas.

The immersive quality of the viewing experience has some natural affinities with using a view camera. From the outset of the project, I had it in mind to extend this relationship and make a large illuminated transparency in response to Gainsborough's 'Showbox'. (fig.10) This took

¹⁰⁸ BERMINGHAM, Ann. 'Gainsborough's Show Box: Illusion and Special Effects in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, June 2007, Vol. 70, No. 2, p. 203.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 203-208.

¹¹⁰ TERPAK, Frances. 'Free Time, Free Spirit: Popular Entertainments in Gainsborough's Era', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, June 2007, Vol. 70, No. 2, p. 210.

¹¹¹ REYNOLDS, 1905, pp. 378-9.

¹¹² PETZOLD, Andreas. 'Stained Glass in the Age of Neoclassicism: The Case of Eglington Margaret Pearson', *The British Art Journal*, Autumn 2000, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 54.

the form of a large lightbox. The photographic image was printed onto an opaque transparent film (its trade name is Duratran) before being bonded to an acrylic sheet, a process known as Diasec. The image is framed and lit from behind by a wall of small LED lights, thus allowing the uniform distribution of light across the image. The illumination for Gainsborough's landscapes, lit from only candles, must have flickered and eventually faded, mimicking the passage from dusk to night. The result of my lightbox is cinematic in its effect, reflecting the aesthetic experience of Gainsborough's 'Showbox'. The depiction of three-dimensional space that the lightbox gave was unexpected. The translucent quality of the backlit image seemed to give an illusion of spatial depth much greater than a traditional print on photographic paper, to such an extent that some viewers took to prodding the image with their fingers, in order to break its surface tension. This is not without precedent: the diorama, another 18th-century mechanism for creating illusion, was so visually deceptive (to paraphrase Constable) that it prompted some viewers to throw various objects at the painted screen, in order to 'test the illusion'.¹¹³

The structure of the picture was loosely based on Gainsborough's *Extensive River Landscape* (c.1748-50), a constructed landscape and a study of perspective, a much-debated topic in 18th-century art circles. The river, for me, acted as an allegory for the slow measure of time, linking Gainsborough's enquiry and my own. (portfolio ref: 3.5) I was initially interested in subverting the picturesque with the prosaic, emphasised by the electric blue 'White Lightning' cider bottles, some floating and some half submerged, on the river's surface. This prompted an interesting response from some viewers who asked if I had inserted the bottles digitally. This took me by surprise and forced me to think about the fidelity of the photographic image in the digital age.

Since its invention, there has always been a precarious relationship between the photographic image and our belief in its 'objective' indexicality. This awkward alliance with the 'truth' has come under greater strain since the development, and technological sophistication, of digital post-production processes. Ken Lum writes that our innate engagement with the veracity of the photographic image often does not consider the sophistication and indiscernable presence of digital manipulation.¹¹⁴ He goes on to argue that it has become problematic to make a photographic image with any sense of authentic authority, given the visual and processing power of digital technology.¹¹⁵ But this already seems like an outdated argument as it supposes that photography at some point was an authentic document, which of course it never

¹¹³ BERMINGHAM, 2007, pp. 207-208.

¹¹⁴ LUM, Ken. *Everything is Relevant: Writings on Art and Life, 1991-2018*, Montreal, Concordia University Press, 2020, p. 216.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

was. If photography set painting free from the burden of faithful likenesses, has the digital era untethered photography from the onerous strain of 'truthfulness'? The remarks by the viewers introduced a tension between reality and artifice, a tension inherent in Gainsborough's landscapes. The 21st-century viewer needs to approach a landscape photograph, just as his 18th-century counterpart approached a transparency in Gainsborough's 'Showbox', empirically and cognitively: 'It is only through an acceptance of the artificial terms dictated by the device that the landscapes can become imaginative stimuli'.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ ASFOUR & WILLIAMSON, 1999, p. 175.

Chapter four: *Countless Edens* (Portfolio ref: 4.1 – 4.18)

I came to the garden at Bottengoms Farm, Wormingford through Ronald Blythe. I knew of John Nash the painter but not the paintings in any great depth, nor of his significance as an artist and plantsman. I found Nash at Bottengoms and his work and 'presence' became an increasingly important element of the images I made there.

Nash, a captain during the First World War, painted *The Cornfield* (1918) as an act of thanksgiving for escaping the horrors he had both witnessed and endured in the mud and trenches of the Western Front.¹¹⁷ (fig 11) It was a symbol of Englishness through the motif of a bucolic landscape, untouched by the 19th-century agricultural depression and its lasting after-effects on the landscape. By the time Nash had finished his second period of national service in 1945, this had become an image of an old England with agriculture now on an industrial scale. (fig 12)¹¹⁸ Due to the German naval blockades of imports, there had been a requirement for increased home food production. Farmers were instructed to turn grassland into arable fields and to increase the yields from their existing cultivated land.¹¹⁹ This required the modernisation of agricultural practice with larger field systems adjusted to accommodate new mechanical processes and machinery. The agricultural landscape was physically and ideologically transformed. It was a landscape that the government had referred to as 'Britain's Battlefield' where 'every farmer was waiting to enter the battle, to be told his station, and put to the test'.¹²⁰ A landscape was modernised by 'new crops, new ways, new farms – but also new men'.¹²¹ It was against the background of this progressive new vision of the landscape, which Matless refers to as 'ecological patriotism', that Nash and his wife moved into the almost derelict farm at Bottengoms, in 1943.¹²² With these ideas of nationalism and citizenship, Nash set about transforming the neglected garden at Bottengoms.

Although Nash's first rendering of a garden was an ink drawing made in 1912, *The Garden at Wood Lane House*, it is a motif that he returned to more frequently with his move to Bottengoms. He created his first garden in Meadle in 1924, but up until his move to Suffolk, the garden seems to exist as a separate entity, a part of his sense of self-expression, but distinct, for the most part, from his painting and drawings. During the inter-war years Nash experienced an antipathy towards art and painting to such an extent that he took a four-year

¹¹⁷ BLYTHE, Ronald. *John Nash at Wormingford*, Wormingford, Friends of St Andrew's Church, 2006, p. 17.

¹¹⁸ Anon. *Land at War: The official story of British farming 1939-1944*, London, The Ministry of Information, 1945, pp. 38-48.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-21.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹²² MATLESS, 2016, p. 307.

sabbatical from any form of art practice. Doubting his work and its relevance, the planting of the garden at Bottengoms can be viewed as a form of personal expression, distinct from but related to *The Cornfield*. As Andy Friend has pointed out in his recent biography of Nash, *John Nash: The Landscape of Love and Solace*, 'gardening was an absorbing preoccupation for John, as ensnaring of his total attention as the act of painting'.¹²³ After all, he referred to himself as an artist/plantsman with equal weight being given to both activities. Any malaise in his relation with the art world was replaced by an excitement with the soil type found around the cottage when he first moved to Bottengoms, and the possibilities to make a second garden embodied what Matless describes as the new conscious citizen emerging in post-war Britain.¹²⁴ Nash established his garden as an act of agrarian creativity and as source material for his illustrations, paintings and prints.¹²⁵ What Matless refers to as 'citizen-scientist' or 'new naturalism', had at its core 'a deep attachment to nature' and whose concern lay in its conservation. This was achieved in part through aesthetic and biological study, 'with observation the primary method of connection'. Considered within this context, both Nash's garden and artwork represent this new enlightened form of citizenship.¹²⁶

I first encountered Ronald Blythe through his writing and I encountered the garden when visiting Blythe at Bottengoms. I was aware that the garden is a space that Blythe writes about and where he writes. Nash's original configuration for the garden is still broadly maintained by Blythe: pathways; walls, steps and some planting. It remains underneath and interwoven with Blythe's additions and planting. However, the garden is not a memorial to Nash but a living manifestation of his presence and absence. It is a domestic landscape embodying both men's sensibilities and physical endeavours. The aim of my project was to explore a visual connection between Nash and Blythe by referencing within each image the garden's phytological and architectural history, reflecting both men's cogitations and labours. The materiality of garden tools and ephemera were also to form part of this narrative, their 'physical endurance' functioning as 'surrogates' of memory, 'material echoes from the past'.¹²⁷ More broadly, and perhaps more ambitiously, I wanted to explore a methodology for capturing an overarching sense of presence and absence which was palpable in the garden.

Franklin Ginn, in his text 'Death, Absence and Afterlife in the Garden', writes that the memory of those deceased resides in the gardens they designed and constructed.¹²⁸ Plants and trees

¹²³ FRIEND, Andy. *John Nash: The Landscape of Love and Solace*, London, Thames & Hudson, 2020, p. 140.

¹²⁴ MATLESS, 2016, p. 343.

¹²⁵ BLYTHE, 2006, p. 17.

¹²⁶ MATLESS, 2016, pp. 343-4.

¹²⁷ HILL, Lisa. 'Archaeologies and Geographies of the Post-Industrial Past: Landscape, Memory and the Spectral', *Cultural Geographies*, July 2013, Vol. 20, No. 3, pp. 380-1.

¹²⁸ GINN, Franklin. 'Death, Absence and Afterlife in the Garden', *Cultural Geographies*, April 2014, Vol. 21, No. 2, p. 232.

remain, grow and intermingle with later planting, functioning as living agents of memory and absence. 'Death comes to the gardener' Ginn writes, but they are sensed 'through spectral presence and through traces'.¹²⁹ 'Spectrality', within the context of social geography, is to me an interesting area of research where the tangible is considered in conjunction with the incorporeal. These seemingly dissonant approaches are brought together in Lisa Hill's paper, 'Archaeologies and Geographies of the Post-Industrial Past: Landscape, Memory and the Spectral', which seeks to extend the dialogue between landscape and memory beyond its normal representations of presence and absence into the spectral, its haunting.¹³⁰ Similarly, this state is defined by Hill as a point of convergence, where past and present collide. Introducing 'hauntology', she continues, 'the spectral is not a ghostly spirit hovering over a concrete world of real objects and living bodies, but is integral to our experience of the world, as the enduring and unsettling capacity of place to haunt'.¹³¹ To experience a place is to have some knowledge and deeper understanding of it, in order to become more aware of any sense of the ethereal. The 'corpus of myths or stories', are an integral part of a place's history as much as the artefacts, Tim Ingold writes.¹³² However, the inevitable question for me was: if something is felt how is it to be communicated? How 'to make visible the invisibility of the spectral?'.¹³³ Or as John Wylie phrases it, 'how might we learn to see these ghostly places?'.¹³⁴ Hill uses Sebald, Proust and Benjamin as examples where literature occupies a place on the margins of space and time, where writing retrieves the past and seemingly dissonant connections, bringing them into the temporal register of the present. Literature is perfectly positioned to articulate this duality. Photography is however restricted to optical indexicality and if it is to translate something unseen, a methodology or iconography was required in order to denote 'presence'. The physical materiality of the garden, and the objects associated with it, thus became agents of what Wylie describes as its 'haunting'.¹³⁵ Wylie argues that haunting should be considered within the boundaries of the 'uncanny', and the 'uncanny' he suggests, following Freud, is a 'compound of strangeness and familiarity'.¹³⁶ The 'strangeness and familiarity' that he discusses is inherent in Nash's unpopulated landscapes and also found, according to some, in the black-and-white photographs by his brother Paul.¹³⁷

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ HILL, 2013, pp. 379-396.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 381.

¹³² INGOLD, 1993, p. 153.

¹³³ HILL, 2013, p. 382.

¹³⁴ WYLIE, 2007, p. 172.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 177.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ NEVE, Christopher. *Unquiet Landscape: Places and Ideas in 20th-Century British Painting*, London, Thames & Hudson, 2020 (first edition 1990), pp. 19-20.

These photographs depict the 'place where something has been', where presences are sensed but never seen, Neve puts it.¹³⁸ Paul's black and white photographs are populated with 'personages' as he referred to them, residing in the images 'like ghosts in a machine', writes Neve.¹³⁹ Paul Nash said of photography that its 'peculiar power' lay in the camera's ability to 'discover formal beauty which ordinarily is hidden from the human eye'.¹⁴⁰ He made a series of monochrome photographs entitled *The Haunted Garden*. In these he felt that the gardens 'could suggest a magical presence, not, however, by its personal figuration, but by some evocative spell which conjured up fantastic images in the mind'. He went on to suggest that both the garden and the images could be 'haunted'.¹⁴¹ The 'magical presence' Nash claims is not a literal one, but based on subjective perceptions separate from any visual cues. My images, however, were based around motifs that delineated both presence and absence. The right-hand panel of my diptych, *Garden Seat and Wild Daffodils (with Ronald collecting his newspaper), Wormingford, 2016*, (fig 13. Portfolio ref: 4.6) in retrospect brings both painters and writer together. The picture taken in Bottengoms garden, through its repetition of motifs, an empty garden bench facing the viewer framed by trees and bushes, references an earlier work by John Nash, *A Rustic Seat Beneath a Tree Canopy* (1925) (fig 14), and Paul Nash's *Haunted Garden* series with the phantasmal appearance of Blythe. All three men are together in an image of triaxial complexity.

In *John Nash at Wormingford*, Blythe writes of the garden's beginning, 'the rubbish was cleared, many beds cut – including a large palette-shaped bed in front of the house, the horse-ponds cleaned out and planted with bamboo, gunnera, flags and huge marsh marigolds...paths created and an orchard made'.¹⁴² My photograph, *Garden & Pots, Wormingford, 2015* (fig 15. Portfolio ref: 4.1) depicts the trace of this 'palette-shaped bed'. It is perhaps more clearly delineated in Nash's painting from 1959, *Wild Garden, Winter* (fig 16), where Nash enjoyed the way snow allowed a linear, almost cartographical representation of the topography's surfaces and structure. His view is made from the same place I stood to make my picture, except that Nash looks from the front door of the house, directly over the garden and into the landscape. My composition is a little more oblique, with worn flag stones and old re-used stone planters populating the composition. And at the moment of the exposure, over sixty years of occupation are brought together.¹⁴³ *Garden*

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁴⁰ VAIZEY, Marina. 'Paul Nash: London', *The Burlington Magazine*. May 2010, Vol. 152, No. 1286, 'Art in Britain', p. 344.

¹⁴¹ PETERS CORBETT, David. "'The Third Factor': Modernity and the Absent City in the Work of Paul Nash, 1919-36', *The Art Bulletin*, September 1992, Vol. 74, No. 3, p. 469.

¹⁴² BLYTHE, 2006, p. 17.

¹⁴³ For a fuller analysis of the compaction of 'space-time' see:

& *Pathway, Wormingford, 2015*, (Portfolio ref: 4.3) brings the bamboo shoots and pathway that Blythe writes about into one image. The flagstones that make up the pathway are becoming integrated into the garden they serve through the accumulated human weight of walking through the garden to the cottage, causing them to sink into the ground and be smothered by creeping foliage. The bamboo shoots that Nash planted in the old horse-pond are still present and a small path cut in the overgrown border leads to a barely visible bench.

Views over a garden through to a mid-distance and extending landscape became a familiar device for Nash. Although they changed over time, many of his still lifes were an attempt to unite the interior world to the landscape beyond it. Often, through a framing window, the viewer is led to the distant landscape. In the early painting *A Window in Bucks* (1928) (fig 17), the dried thistles, brought in from the outside, almost gesture for our eye to wander outside and explore a garden beneath the first-storey window, snow-covered fields and the elms demarcating field boundaries. The atmospheric tonal recession of the modulated colour palette gives the painting a sense of distance, whereas this is missing in his later works where the foreground and background sit on the same plane. *The Garden Under Snow* (c. 1924-30) (fig 18), which is essentially the same view as *A Window in Bucks* but without the compositional element of the curtain, which acts as a repoussoir, is an early example of this foreshortening to such an extent that the image could be viewed as a whole or framed in four separate quadrants, each a landscape in itself. My picture *Still Life, Wormingford, 2017* (fig 19. Portfolio ref: 4.10) is taken from a front room at Bottengoms, depicting an arrangement of flowers, a window behind framing the landscape beyond; it directly corresponds to the view and composition of Nash's 1958 pen and ink drawing, *The Farmhouse Window*. (fig 20) The flowers in my picture sit on Nash's watercolour table and apart from the modern phone sitting on it, the image loses all temporal register. My still life was composed by making multiple negatives of different exposures, scanned and joined together in order to transcribe the scene with more fidelity to human vision, where our eyes adjust to the large contrast of light and shade. This had the effect of registering the landscape in great detail and foreshortening the pictorial space where the exterior is brought into a closer relationship with the interior. This interdependence between the two spaces replicates Nash's imagery, where there is a lack of tonal recession to such an extent that both spaces seem to reside on the same plane. *Table & Garden Tools, Wormingford, 2016* (fig 21. Portfolio ref: 4.11) is an amalgamation of a number of Nash's still lifes, with the device of

DODGSHON, Robert. 'In What Way is the World Really Flat? Debates over Geographies of the Moment', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 26, 2008, pp. 300–14.

the view through a window, over a table and window sill which frames the landscape beyond. It represents garden tools that according to Blythe both he and Nash used to shape the garden. Franklin Ginn's 'agents of memory' sit on the same table as in *Still Life, Wormingford*, alongside a row of Nash's shells and the carved wooden cow that last made an appearance in *A Window in Bucks*, and bananas sit in a bowl, replicating Nash's wood cut *Still Life* (1923).

Countless Edens viewed as a corpus of work is an extended moment. I was always aware that the period of artistic activity associated with Bottengoms, one that played such a pivotal role in the English landscape tradition, may soon end; at the time of writing, Blythe is ninety-nine and the cottage bequeathed to the Suffolk Wildlife Trust. Temporality lies at the heart of the series, not a linear narrative form, but an oscillation between past and present.

Perhaps absence and memory are best captured in a picture of a picture. Hanging on a wooden panelled door, thick with years of overpainting, is a framed and somewhat rudimentary painting of the house and garden at Bottengoms. (fig 22. Portfolio ref: 4.15) Blythe told me it was painted from memory by Blythe's brother, Gerald, who visited the garden on one of his few trips from his home in Australia. Each brushstroke is the gesture of recall and memory. It is not a painting based on verisimilitude but on recovery, aspects are absent while others exaggerated and out of context, but as Ingold points out, 'the landscape is not an object, it is shaped by us and it shapes us.'¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ INGOLD, 1993, p. 162.

Conclusion

The four series of work represent a sustained study of the English landscape, and particularly of East Anglia, which I have undertaken for the last twenty-eight years. The commentary references the connections between each series while also recognising points of significant departure, emerging patterns, new directions and tangents. Photography and photographers are notable by their absence. This was not a conscious decision, but rather reflects my ongoing reliance on divergent spheres of practice and research. My remit was not simply to contextualise my work within the framework of landscape painting or literature, but rather weave it into its fabric. Making my type of landscape-based work in the geographic location that I do, with all its traditions and associations, is to recognise that my work resides within this realm of English landscape painting and writing. The representation of the landscape, and in particular Constable's, continues to symbolise this legacy. In an action that mirrored the Council for the Protection of Rural England's warning in 1929, only recently climate protesters glued themselves to the frame of Constable's *Hay Wain* replacing the canvas with an image of a tarmacked *Hay Wain* complete with a flying aircraft, a further reference to the 1929 cartoon. (fig. 23) ¹⁴⁵ Constable's 'pastoral' vision remains a symbol of the English landscape painting tradition and a measure from which beauty is made.

Chapter one, *What Has Been Gathered Will Disperse*, was chosen as a point of departure for this study as it marked a significant shift in my methodology of working and in understanding the duality of the landscape, in this case a domestic landscape, its present reality and its memory. As I re-visited and considered this work for the first time in eighteen years, I understood the significance of this space and the work made there as a form of re-remembering, a recognition of memories submerged. It was also the first body of work that was focused on a single location: a garden. The pictures were cultivated through the process of returning, walking and looking. This familiarity of place led to pictures that were not apparent, or revealed, when first seen. Constable's conversance with a small circumference of the Stour Valley has since led me to an understanding of this aspect of his process, his familiarity engendered through repetition and a particular sense of letting the landscape reveal itself, as noted in one of his letters to Maria Bicknell. It was a series of photographs which re-orientated my practice and established a new trajectory for all my subsequent bodies of work.

Ted Ellis became known as the 'people's naturalist'. Reading Sebald it always seemed to me curious that he never introduced his readers to him, given Ellis's reputation and stature in

¹⁴⁵ Anon. 'Climate protesters glue themselves to John Constable masterpiece', *BBC News*, 5 July 2022. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-62038615> [date accessed 5 July 2022].

addition to Wheatfen's close proximity to Sebald's home. However, recently I have been able to establish a connection. In her new biography of Sebald, Carole Angier claims that Sebald, in *The Emigrants*, based the character of Edwin Elliot 'faithfully' on Ted Ellis.¹⁴⁶ And, Sebald's narrative in *The Rings of Saturn* of a train originally built for the Chinese emperor but doing its duty in Suffolk was first told by Phyllis Ellis, Angier claims, at a party Sebald attended.¹⁴⁷ Whether this is true or not, that Sebald would have possibly appropriated Ellis's character and this story is no surprise given his propensity for re-using and re-contextualising other people's accounts and anecdotes as his own. And, viewed from a different perspective, my interpretations of the Ellis's garden to some extent follow this form of appropriation. To quote Walter Benjamin's essay, 'The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov', 'storytelling is always the art of repeating stories, and this art is lost when the stories are no longer retained'.¹⁴⁸

Produced in parallel to *What Has Been Gathered Will Disperse, The Edge of the Murmur of Things Divine* was also rooted in familiarity and returning. Constable wrote to Charles Leslie: 'my limited and abstracted art is to be found under every hedge, and in every lane, and therefore nobody thinks it worth picking up'.¹⁴⁹ I was aware when making this work that the pictures could be viewed as a contemporary interpretation of Constable's connection to the everyday landscape. Writers such as Mabey have, like Constable, been drawn to the landscape of the overlooked, now often referred to as 'edgelands'. Mabey's observations and writing seemed to me to extend the enquiry which Constable had initiated. And like Constable, Mabey, it could be argued, reset our understanding of what constitutes both landscape and beauty. Reflecting on the body of work which I started eighteen years ago and have extended at periodic points since, despite its seemingly austere and formal qualities, it reflects aesthetic concerns stretching back to the 1920s and the ongoing debates around regional planting and ecological concerns. It is an interpretation of a modern English landscape and contemporary explications of Constable's desire to make the mundane worthy of our attention.

The connection between my work and the English landscape tradition was the primary focus of chapter three. *The View from Here* explored Gainsborough's landscapes through the prism of my own practice. The narrative was underpinned by an exploration of artifice, aesthetic perception and consciousness in 18th-century artistic and philosophical discourse. Endeavouring to understand these elements, Descartes drew an analogy between, on the one

¹⁴⁶ ANGIER, Carole. *Speak, Silence: In Search of W.G. Sebald*, London, Bloomsbury Circus, 2021, p. 22.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 407.

¹⁴⁸ Quoted in DANIELS & LORIMER, 2012, p. 5.

¹⁴⁹ Anon. 'RE-THINKING LANDSCAPE PAINTING', *Tate*. <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/constable-salisbury-cathedral-from-the-meadows-t13896/in-depth-salisbury-cathedral-from-the-meadows/subjects-meaning> [date accessed 7 June 2022].

hand, perception and consciousness, and, on the other, the camera obscura and the image projected onto a screen. Although the understanding of the mechanisms of perception, brain activity and function have advanced, a complete understanding of consciousness remains elusive according to current scientific thought.¹⁵⁰ Because of these gaps in our knowledge, Descartes's analogy retains its currency when using a modern view camera, which is a camera obscura in essence. I reconsidered the camera's ground glass to be more than just a plane on which to compose and focus, but as an interface between the three-dimensional world and the two-dimensional image, a place where vision and perception converge. It's a confluence which is too often overlooked as merely an intermediate step to the final image. I was reflecting on these thoughts when making a recent picture. The light was changing as the sun was intermittently diffused by clouds, and I imagined that this, in a way, replicated the experience of viewing one of Gainsborough's transparencies as the painted sheet of glass was animated by the flickering candles. Given Gainsborough's method of working with models, perhaps his 'viewing device' was a natural extension of his methodology. My making a contemporary version of his 'Showbox' brought the debate back to artifice and photography's tenuous affinity with 'truth', and in doing so, connected both bodies of work though separated by over two hundred and fifty years.

Countless Edens, like *What Has been Gathered Will Disperse*, was based in a singular private garden. The garden at Bottengoms is situated at the heart of the English landscape tradition not only through its location, 'where Gainsborough painted up to and Constable down from', but by the furthering of the tradition in the work of both Nash and Blythe.¹⁵¹ I made references to Nash's imagery by replicating motifs, compositions and pictorial devices, such as the foreshortening of perspectival space, in a number of my pictures. These elements often resided in the background, and emerged and existed alongside Blythe's presence: a row of *Countryman* journals with Nash's illustrations on the front, the carved cow, garden tools, shells and furniture, for example, all integrated with Blythe's objects and arranged by him. The interiors I made for this series are the only ones I have made for any portfolio. They continued the personal narratives of both writer and painter found in the garden. This is particularly apparent in Blythe's mantelpieces, which function as small ever-changing tableaux of his life.

Based on my work at Wheatfen, I began to study the spectral within the context of a domestic landscape. This was expanded upon in in *Countless Edens*. The spectral as a geographical

¹⁵⁰ For further reading on consciousness see:

WEBB, Richard (ed.). 'Consciousness: Understanding the Ghost in the Machine', *New Scientist*, Essential Guide No. 12, 2022, pp. 1-96.

¹⁵¹ BLYTHE, 2006, p. 3.

discipline is as Maddern and Adey admit, 'murky and disconnected', and my text was not intended to explore this relatively new area of research per se, but rather to provide a scholarly framework for understanding my pictures of presence and absence, relationships that happened over an extended time but which reside within a singular image.¹⁵²

None of the chapters discuss colour in any great detail, either that of the artists included in my research or the role it plays in my practice. As already noted, my use of colour incorporated the muted tones of overcast days as practiced by a number of German photographers from the 1980s. This gave the images a 'quietness', with the sky almost assuming the appearance of a blank backdrop. Over time, and sometimes through necessity to begin with, this has changed, with the incorporation of subtle cloud formations. A constant, however, is that I still primarily work with a restrained palette.

This is at odds with the artists who formed part of my enquiry. Constable paintings primarily depict the summer months, often painted at noon when the sun was at its zenith. He spoke about the importance of the sky in his paintings. For perhaps the first time, the light and its effect on the landscape and its colouring were accurately transcribed through Constable's close observation of them. His paintings therefore, demonstrated an active correlation between the sky and the land. For Constable, art was a science and through science came truth. He aspired to depict the light and colours of the world with verisimilitude derived from observation and experience. This is more so than Gainsborough, whose world was a complex mixture of observation and imagination. Reynolds highlighted Gainsborough's practice of painting by candlelight at night.¹⁵³ This, Reynolds claimed, gave Gainsborough's paintings greater chiaroscuro and richness in colour.¹⁵⁴ Though claiming this was 'advantageous' for Gainsborough's landscapes, the sense of artifice is heightened by artificial scenes illuminated by artificial light. On my first visit to the Frick Collection in New York, I encountered a wall of Rembrandts, Velazquez and Turners. Amongst the array of subjects and colours was a Constable landscape, comprising predominately a range of browns and greens (*The White Horse*, 1819). Even from a distance it was recognisable by its colouring and its fidelity to the landscape of East Anglia. This is true of Nash whose colourisation in his landscape paintings from Bottengoms onwards incorporated subdued colours, overcast light and breadth of nuance in his limited colour range. The colours of Nash and Constable were not a direct

¹⁵² MADDERN, Jo Frances & ADEY, Peter. 'Editorial: Spectro-Geographies', *Cultural Geographies*, July 2008, Vol. 15, No. 3, p. 292.

¹⁵³ REYNOLDS, 1905, pp. 378-9.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

influence on my use of colour, but they reiterated its broader significance: the beauty to be seen in the ordinary.

Despite their heterogeneous appearance, all of the landscape photographs considered within this text represent the contemporary English landscape and its traditions in both writing and painting. My text did not attempt to find a non-visual language to represent the images, but rather functioned as a commentary on each portfolio's critical and philosophical underpinning. It was an attempt to engage with what Paulson refers to as the 'secondary state', a process of gaining a critical understanding of each series for both the reader and myself.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ PAULSON, 1982, p. 152.

Epilogue: *The Songs That Saints Sing Have No Ending* (Portfolio ref: 5.1 – 5.10)

The Songs That Saints Sing Have No Ending is a set of pictures which I began in 2019. It currently comprises ten 20" x 24" colour photographs. It was initially an attempt to extend my dialogue with Blythe and Nash, albeit through a different format than the garden and interiors of Bottengoms.

Blythe seemed to still inhabit a world of faith and ritual that was an approach to life that reflects the liturgical life of the parish.¹⁵⁶ Applying Joseph Rivera's criteria where 'liturgy embodies a primal existential attunement to the world, that of existing before God as a way of life', Blythe could indeed be viewed as a modern-day ascetic¹⁵⁷. His faith is clearly evident in much of his writing which revolves around the church's liturgical calendar and nature's seasonal cycles, with the two often interwoven. His weekly four-hundred-word columns for the *Church Times* were based on these cyclic patterns. Starting in November 1993, 'Word from Wormingford', as it was titled (and from which the title of this series is taken), lasted until he retired from writing it in 2017.¹⁵⁸ These short contemplative 'philosophical reflections', as he referred to them during one of our conversations, have since been compiled into numerous volumes, all orientated around one calendar year. My new images started as an attempt to reflect the patterns of the liturgy and the seasons by photographing the simple flower arrangements found inside parish churches. (fig. 24) I was interested in seeing if there was any correlation between the colours found in the flower arrangements and the vestments and other symbols used in the Church of England's liturgical rites. However, within the context of the church interior the reading of my images seemed too overtly loaded with religious symbolism, beyond that of just the liturgy. As Christina M. Gschwandtner wrote, there are 'degrees of intensity of liturgical space'.¹⁵⁹ I therefore started to photograph the flowers found in church porches as the liminality of the space felt less overtly reverent. Helen Lunnon wrote in her book, *East Anglian Church Porches and their Medieval Context*, that historically the church porch has been referred to as a gateway 'setting the terms of engagement between the people outside and the places inside'.¹⁶⁰ Gschwandtner goes further and refers to the porch as 'a threshold across which one must step both physically and metaphorically'.¹⁶¹ If viewed as a bridge between the profane and the divine, then church porches present a space where both worlds

¹⁵⁶ Anon. 'The Liturgy and the Parish', *Life of the Spirit (1946-1964)*, June 1955, Vol. 9, No. 108, p. 540.

¹⁵⁷ RIVERA, Joseph. 'Toward a Liturgical Existentialism', *New Blackfriars*, January 2013, Vol. 94, No. 1049, p. 82.

¹⁵⁸ BLYTHE, Ronald. *Borderland: Continuity and Change in the Countryside*, Norwich, Canterbury Press, 2007 (first edition 2005), p. 390.

¹⁵⁹ GSCHWANDTNER, Christina M. *Welcoming Finitude: Toward a Phenomenology of Orthodox Liturgy*, Oxford, Fordham University Press, 2019, p. 74.

¹⁶⁰ LUNNON, Helen E. *East Anglian Church Porches and their Medieval Context*, Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2020, p. 5.

¹⁶¹ GSCHWANDTNER, 2019, p. 74.

merge, the profane and the spiritual. Within the context of my pictures this established a space which metaphorically brought together Blythe's Christian faith and Nash's secular faith in nature. I settled on one porch, that of St Andrew's, Claxton, to make the pictures. (fig. 25) The motif for the current set of photographs are flowers found in the porch's opposing niches, simple arrangements of garden flowers and cuttings from hedgerows and the surrounding fields, all picked and arranged by the anonymous person/people of the church. (fig 26. Portfolio ref: 5.4). These recesses, former window apertures which have been blocked up and repeatedly plastered and painted, took on the spatial elements of many niches found in Dutch 17th-century flower painting. But also, importantly, the flowers unknowingly referenced Nash's plants and flowers found in his paintings and illustrations; flowers arranged in a vase sitting on a window sill or a flower illustration set against a simple plain coloured background. (fig. 27)

Connections between the liturgy and porches is not without precedent; while their designers, craftsmen and stone masons remain anonymous, many of the porches incorporate strong features of liturgical symbolism in their carvings and stonework.¹⁶² Predominantly south-facing, open at their entrance and sealed by the church door, they, Lunnon writes, are unsettling in their liminal ambiguity.¹⁶³ Although one often thinks of the church porch as a transitional space, historically they had a number of secular and spiritual uses, resolving legal matters, places of marriages and burial, a space for baptismal preparation, acts of penance and liturgical celebration.¹⁶⁴ Given these historical uses it seemed a pertinent allegorical bridge between Nash and Blythe, the secular and the spiritual.

The flowers ultimately do not represent any consistent connection to a liturgical cycle but represent symbolic emblems of the British seasons. They are a set of pictures that capture the continuous cycle of life, faith and art.

Like Blythe, my father was a lay reader in the Church of England. I would sometimes accompany him as he drove to the local churches around the rural flat-lands of Lincolnshire to administer his ecclesiastical duties. Perhaps this is why I was drawn to modest country places of worship, buildings that were originally and appropriately referred to as 'field churches'.¹⁶⁵ Their smell, what Blythe describes as the 'dormant scents in the woodwork, the

¹⁶² LUNNON, 2020, p .5.

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁶⁴ For further reading see LUNNON, 2020, pp. 55-100.

¹⁶⁵ ORME, Nicholas. *Going to Church in Medieval England*, London, Yale University Press, 2022, p. 13.

frontals, the hymnbooks, those choir-robos which haven't processed up the aisle for ages', seemed familiar and almost comforting.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ BLYTHE, Ronald. *A Year at Bottengoms Farm*, Norwich, Canterbury Press, 2007 (first edition 2006), p. 23.

Illustrations

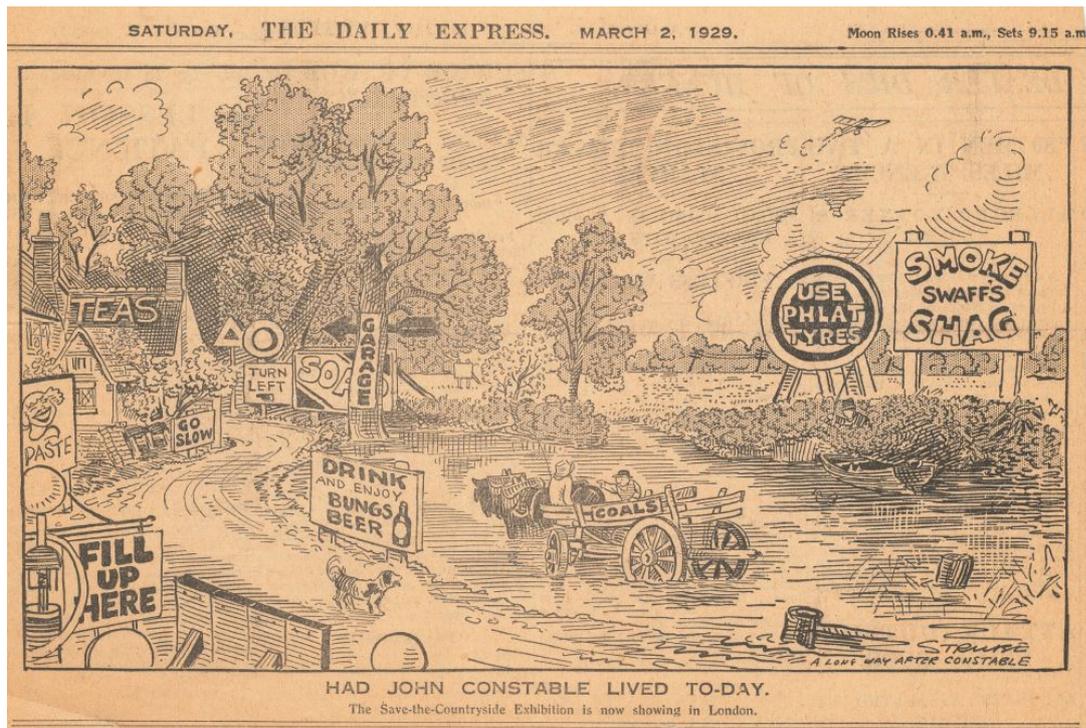


Fig. 1
Council for the Preservation of Rural England. *Save the Countryside* exhibition.
The Daily Express, 2 March 1929.



Fig. 2
The Times, Saturday 2 April 2011.



Fig. 3
Installation photograph: *Double Take: Photography & the Garden*,
Hestercombe Gallery, Taunton, 2015.



Fig. 4
Garden & Carpets 2, Wheatfen, Surlingham, 2004.



Fig. 5
Untitled No. 6, 2005.



Fig. 6
Untitled No. 8, 2013.



Fig. 7
A Gainsborough model figure photographed in 1930.



Fig. 8
Poringland, 2010.



Fig. 9
Gainsborough's 'Showbox' and glass painted transparency.



Fig. 10
Installation view of lightbox, *The View from Here*, Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery, 2012.



Fig. 11
John Nash *The Cornfield*, 1918.



Fig. 12
British wartime harvest, 1943.



Fig. 13
Diptych: Right panel. *Garden Seat & Wild Daffodils (with Ronald collecting his newspaper)*, Wormingford, 2016.



Fig. 14
John Nash. *A Rustic Seat Beneath a Tree Canopy*, 1925.



Fig. 15
Garden & Pots, Wormingford, 2015.



Fig. 16
John Nash. *Wild Garden, Winter, 1959.*



Fig. 17
John Nash. *A Window in Bucks*, 1928.

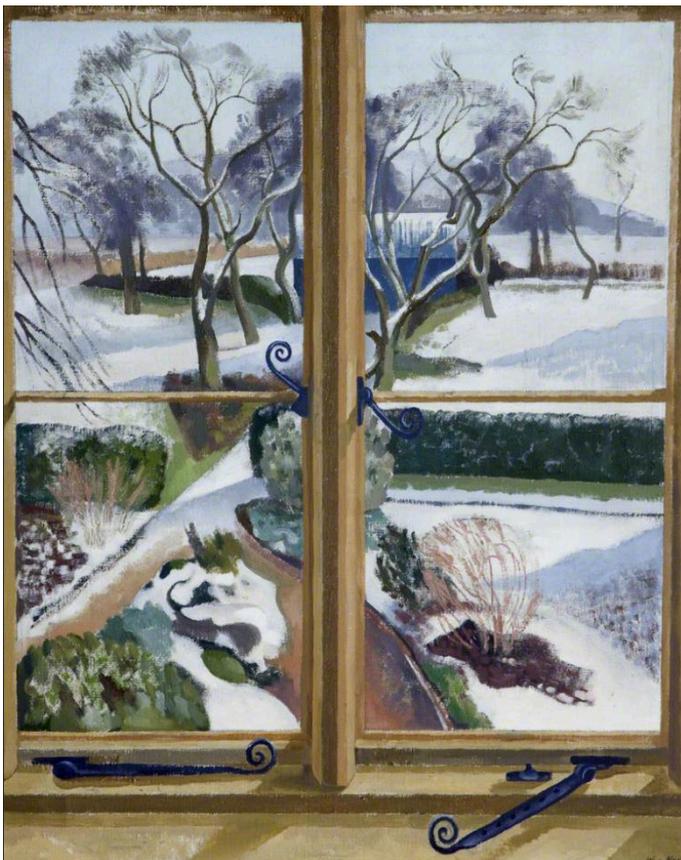


Fig. 18
John Nash. *The Garden Under Snow*, c. 1924-30.



Fig. 19
Still Life, Wormingford, 2017.



Fig. 20
John Nash. *The Farmhouse Window, 1958.*



Fig. 21
Table & Garden Tools, Wormingford, 2016.



Fig. 22
Painting (Bottengoms Farm by Gerald Blythe), Wormingford, 2017.



Fig. 23
The Independent, 4 July, 2022.



Fig. 24
Lent, St. Ethelburt, Thurlton, 2019.



Fig. 25
St Andrew's church porch, Claxton.



Fig. 26
No. 4, *St Andrew's, Claxton*, 2020.

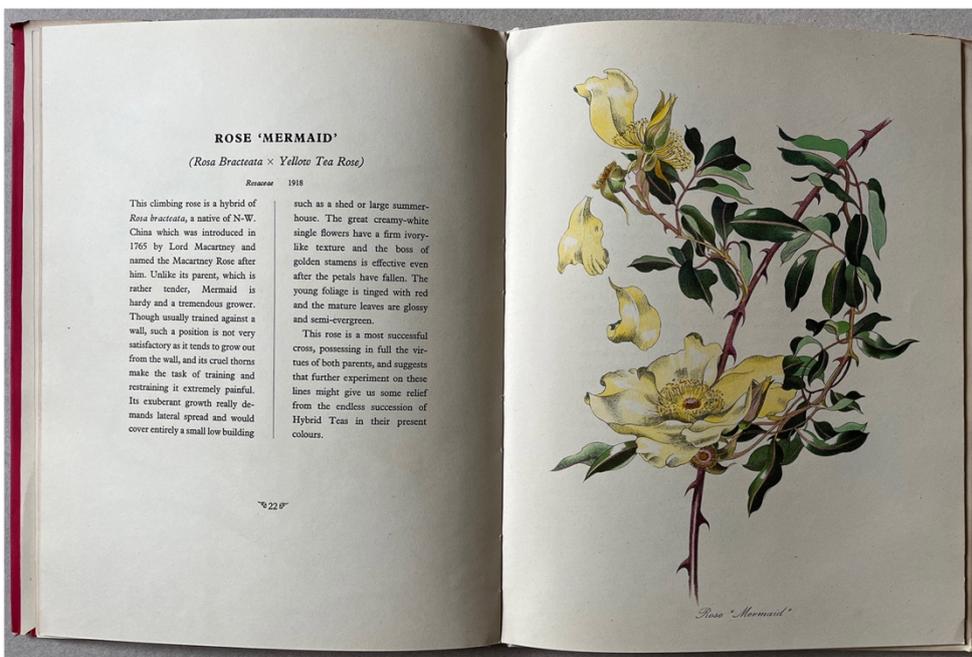


Fig. 27
John Nash. *English Garden Flowers*, published 1948.

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Fig. 1

Council for the Preservation of Rural England. *Save the Countryside* exhibition.

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Fig. 2

The Times, Saturday 2 April 2011. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/way-clear-for-pylons-to-blot-the-landscape-gcwcctvp2r> [date accessed 25 July 2022].

Fig. 3

Installation photograph: *Double Take: Photography & the Garden*, Hestercombe Gallery, Taunton, 2015.

Fig. 4

Mark Edwards

Garden & Carpets 2, Wheatfen, Surlingham, 2004.

Colour print, 50.8 cm x 60.96 cm

Fig. 5

Mark Edwards

Untitled No. 6, 2005.

Colour print, 122 cm x 152 cm

Fig. 6

Mark Edwards

Untitled No. 8, 2013.

Digital colour print, 122 cm x 152 cm

Fig. 7

A Gainsborough model figure photographed in 1930.

<https://www.rct.uk/collection/themes/exhibitions/young-gainsborough-rediscovered-landscape-drawings/york-art-gallery/drawing-in-the-studio> [date accessed 12 July 2022].

Fig. 8

Mark Edwards

Poringland, 2010.

Digital colour print, 100 cm x 122 cm

Fig. 9

Gainsborough's 'Showbox' and glass painted transparency. © V&A Museum, London

<https://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/news/thomas-gainsboroughs-showbox> [date accessed 12 July 2022].

Fig. 10

Installation view of lightbox, *The View from Here*, Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery, 2012.

Fig. 11

John Nash

The Cornfield, 1918.

Oil on canvas, 686 cm x 762 cm. © The estate of John Nash/Bridgeman Images

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/nash-the-cornfield-n06074> [date accessed 12 July 2022].

Fig. 12

British wartime harvest, 1943.

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Fig. 13

Mark Edwards

Diptych: Right panel. *Garden Seat & Wild Daffodils (with Ronald collecting his newspaper)*, *Wormingford*, 2016.

Digital colour print, 122 cm x 152 cm

Fig. 14

John Nash

A Rustic Seat Beneath a Tree Canopy, 1925.

Wood engraving on paper, 19.5 cm x 13.5 cm

<https://www.vblfcollection.org.uk/john-nash-1893-1977-a-rustic-seat-beneath-a-tree-canopy/>
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Fig. 15

Mark Edwards

Garden & Pots, Wormingford, 2015.

Digital colour print, 100 cm x 122 cm

Fig. 16

John Nash

Wild Garden, Winter, 1959.

Watercolour on paper, 406cm x 571 cm. © The estate of John Nash/Bridgeman Images

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/nash-wild-garden-winter-t00280> [date accessed 13 July 2022].

Fig. 17

John Nash

A Window in Bucks, 1928.

Oil on canvas. Reproduced as an auto-lithograph 1928

<https://inexpensiveprogress.com/1077/a-window-in-bucks/> [date accessed 13 July 2022].

Fig. 18

John Nash

The Garden Under Snow, c. 1924-30.

Oil on canvas, 76.4 cm x 61.2 cm © The estate of John Nash/Bridgeman Images

<https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/the-garden-under-snow-122576> [date accessed 13 July 2022].

Fig. 19

Mark Edwards

Still Life, Wormingford, 2017.

Digital colour print, 100 cm x 122 cm

Fig. 20

John Nash

The Farmhouse Window, 1958.

Pen and ink drawing

Fig. 21

Mark Edwards

Table & Garden Tools, Wormingford, 2016.

Digital colour print, 100 cm x 122 cm

Fig. 22

Mark Edwards

Painting (Bottengoms Farm by Gerald Blythe), Wormingford, 2017.

Digital colour print, 122 cm x 100 cm

Fig. 23

The Independent, 4 July 2022.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/climate-change/climate-protesters-glue-constable-b2115665.html> [date accessed 5 July 2022].

Fig. 24

Mark Edwards

Lent, St. Ethelburt, Thurlton, 2019.

Digital colour print, 60.96 x 50.8 cm

Fig. 25

St Andrew's church porch, Claxton.

Fig. 26

Mark Edwards

No. 4, St Andrew's, Claxton, 2020.

Digital colour print, 60.96 x 50.8 cm

Fig. 27

John Nash

English Garden Flowers, published 1948.

28.5 cm x 22 cm