

FINDLAY GALLERIES



HUGO GRENVILLE





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Memories & Reflections

FINDLAY GALLERIES

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Photo: Grenville in Studio, 2017



HUGO GRENVILLE

*new paintings by renowned
British Contemporary Painter*

—Helen Rosslyn

Hugo Grenville is one of those rare painters who is able to converse in great depth about art at the same time as working on a canvas of his own. Several years ago I had the good fortune to sit to him for my portrait, and came away from each session inspired by his analysis of Cezanne's perspective, the colour palette of Matisse, or the painterly marks of De Kooning. As an art historian, Hugo's journey as a painter remains fascinating to me, because of his wide frame of reference and his constant experimentation with new techniques and ideas.

Throughout all this however, Hugo's work retains its own unique idiom, which can be enjoyed on its own merits. He is a true English Romantic, whose paintings are an unashamed and joyous celebration of life, in his own words 'a passionate defense of beauty and domestic harmony'.

Having been asked to write an introduction to this show, I set off for Hugo's studio in Bristol on a warm afternoon in June, to be shown the new body of work. He had told me on the phone that these paintings represented a significant shift in his own artistic development and I was intrigued.

The first canvas we looked at together was *The Heart of the Matter* – and I immediately saw what he meant. The exuberance of pattern and paint so characteristic of a Grenville canvas had been anchored with some determined vertical lines. Memories of Suffolk, *The Artist's Mother*,

Spring in Suffolk followed next, all with the same strong counter-balance of shapes. I asked him what he felt was the essence of this new body of work and he explained that he had been experimenting in particular with juxtaposition, setting thin marks adjacent to thick; warm colours against cool; light against dark; curves against firm lines. The results, we agreed, were very satisfying, both for painter and viewer.

Hugo Grenville has, quite simply, a great eye for design. As he always does so successfully in the decoration of his own house, he takes colour and texture and mixes them up with a flair that few of us possess. Just as a garden designer creates a garden or a florist arranges flowers, so Grenville meticulously assembles the abstract qualities of light and colour on a canvas to create harmony.

'There is something quite magical about the medium of paint' he enthuses, as we look together at *The End and the Beginning Were Always There* where he plays with the quality of his oils, creating thick painterly marks to frame his landscape and liquidity to give fluency to the figure, a diagonal line of blues running through this canvas, merging figure and background.

'These are not political paintings, but they do aim to demonstrate that gentle abstract qualities have a spiritual element to them – and this is definitely what underpins the show'. >>

The 34 new paintings in this exhibition pull together three central subjects in art: the figure; the landscape; and the still life. Interweaving with each other, they present an amalgam of the artist's memory and observation: Spring in Suffolk with its windswept Suffolk sky; Memories of Aegean Summer the hot colours of a Mediterranean fishing village; The End of a Perfect Day the wistful air of a summer evening as the day draws to a close.

Often, Grenville's paintings are interior landscapes with a contemplative figure reading or dreaming in the foreground, sometimes the interplay of a figure and its reflection in a mirror, both giving the viewer a focal point and leading the eye into the background beyond, hinting at the artist's belief that we are all defined by the spaces we inhabit.

The element of still life pervades his painting too, from the sinewy curve of his favourite chair Of Time Past and Time Future; to his jugs of flowers and bowls of fruit – leitmotifs bringing nature into the studio.

Art is all around us in Hugo's work, in pattern and shape, colour and tone, geometric patterns against curves in The Absent Model (an affectionate portrait of the artist's adored dog Marvel); the vertical band of triangular shapes that guides the eye of the viewer in Dreams and Reflections.

Grenville's work may be informed by centuries of art history, from Botticelli's idealisation of beauty, to Patrick Heron's love of textile or Pollock's celebration of the medium of oil paint, but he transcends all of these to find an artistic expression that is entirely his own – canvases that capture the exuberance and timelessness of a romantic English vision. ■



The Heart of the Matter II • oil on canvas • 42 x 60 inches • 138174



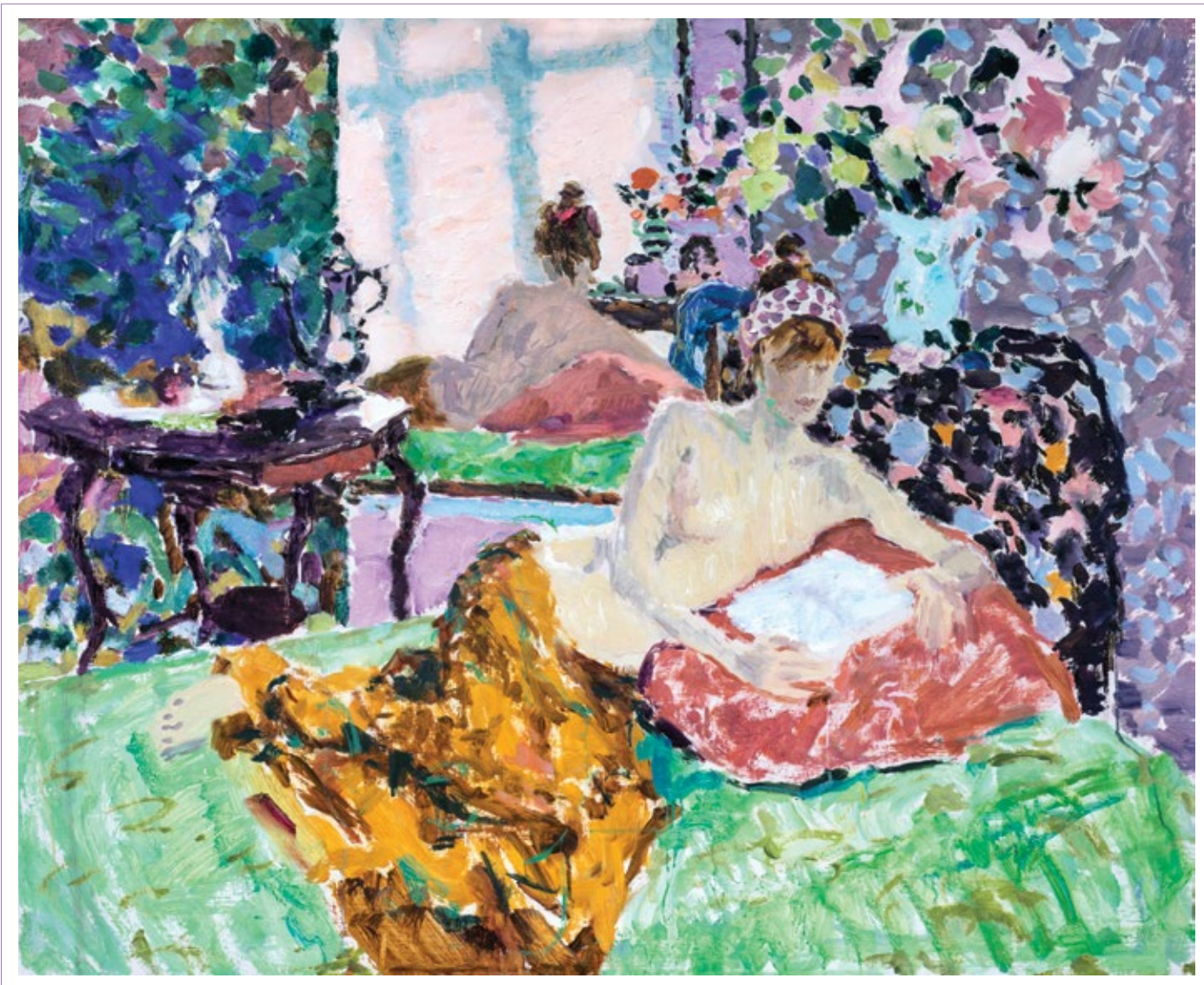
Of Time Past and Time Future • oil on canvas • 48 x 54 inches • 138215



Spring in Suffolk • oil on canvas • 48 x 54 inches • 138176



Be Still My Soul • oil on canvas • 38 x 46 inches • 138207



Remembrance of Times Past • oil on canvas • 36 x 44 inches • 138205



Reading for Pleasure • oil on canvas • 24 x 30 inches • 138197



The End and the Beginning Were Always There • oil on canvas • 48 x 60 inches • 138216



The End of a Perfect Day • oil on canvas • 42 x 42 inches • 138177



The Artist's Mother • oil on canvas • 32 x 42 inches • 138178



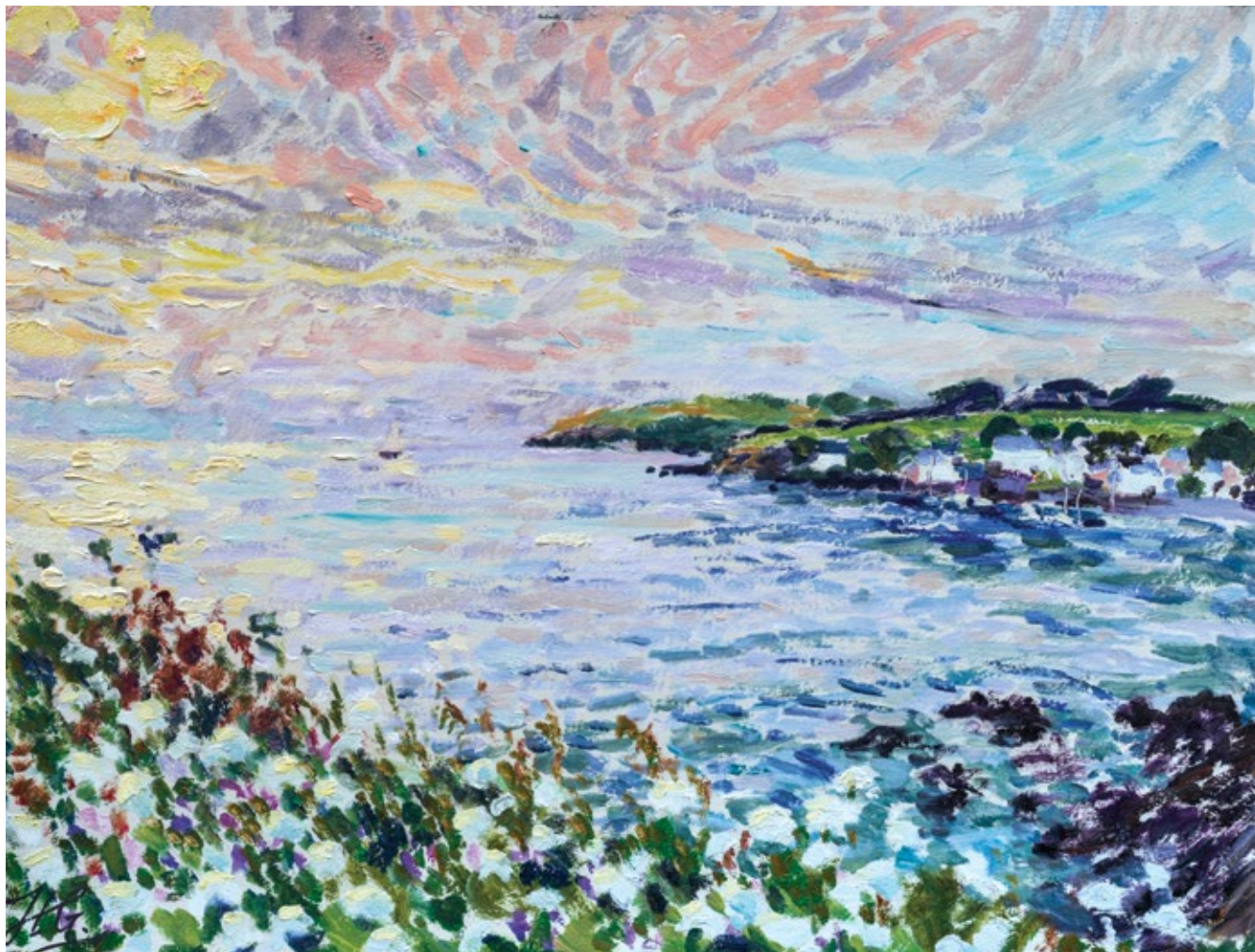
High Summer • oil on paper • 19 1/4 x 28 inches • 138192



Breakfast at Symi • oil on paper • 25 x 30 1/4 inches • 138198



Setting out to Sea • oil on canvas • 24 x 36 inches • 138199



Dawn from the Cornish Cliffs • oil on paper • 19 ¹/₄ x 25 inches • 138191



Sundown at Symi • oil on canvas • 18 x 36 inches • 138196



The Midi at Marseillan • oil on canvas • 36 x 34 inches • 138201



Spring on the Itchen • oil on canvas • 24 x 24 inches • 138194



Spirit of Provence I • oil on canvas • 42 x 42 inches • 138210



The Absent Model • oil on canvas • 46 x 38 inches • 138211



A Winter Garden • oil and gold leaf on canvas • 42 x 42 inches • 138206



Memories of Suffolk • oil on canvas • 30 x 60 inches • 138214



Market Day: Autumn in Andalusia • oil on canvas • 32 x 42 inches • 138204



Rainy Day, Ronda • oil on paper • 19 x 25 ¹/₄ inches • 138190



Late Winter, Dorset • oil on paper • 13 ¹/₄ x 25 inches • 138189

HUGO GRENVILLE

(b. 1958)

Hugo Grenville is a renowned British Contemporary Painter whose work stands as a symbol of promise in a world where satire and irony predominate. Like the paintings made by Bonnard and Matisse during the Second World War, none of which allude to the grim reality of daily life, his work is grounded in the need to celebrate life, and to express our sense of existence through the recognition of the transforming power of colour and light.

Through the arrangement of shape, line, pattern and colour the world that is conjured is lyrical, dreamlike and at peace with itself. The still life, landscape and figure paintings do not represent an actual moment in time, but are rather the result of a process of reflection, recollection and reinvention, a distillation of human experience. The flowers in the jug, or the nude on the bed belong not to now, but to all time, just as the abstract elements of colour and light are timeless, and connect us to both the past and the future, to the visible world, and to the invisible.



Photo: Grenville in Studio, 2017



For My Dear Friend Hugo

I am honoured to be given this opportunity to share my appreciation and admiration for Hugo as a wonderful painter, inspirational teacher and dear friend. I write both as a patron and pupil. My brief from James R. Borynack, the esteemed Chairman of the gallery, was to express how it feels to live with a big Hugo Grenville painting. Well, as my wife Jane said upon seeing it, "Mike we've just got to have it".

We bought *Still life with Poppies Orchid and Dutch Coffee Pot* in 2006 and it has graced our morning room and given us unending pleasure ever since. Even in these days of gender correctness, I think it has to be described as a feminine painting; gentle, calm and beguiling. No harsh discordant colours or hard edges. The overall and lasting impression is akin to a half remembered happy dream drifting away gently into the subconscious, but somehow retaining its essential spirit. Hugo is a master of bringing the "outside" in, to become an integral part of his interiors. For me, it is Hugo's spirit that is so joyfully apparent in all his paintings. His obvious delight and fascination with the everyday artifacts of living; the coffee jug, flowers, fruits, vases, tables and so on, endlessly arranged and rearranged in those lyrical combinations that conjure up, to use one of his favourite teaching analogies, a musical mood, wistful, reflective, dreamy but always romantic.

We came over to New York for Hugo's first exhibition with Wally Findlay Galleries in 2006, and we are thrilled to be here again. The gallery is keeping up their long tradition of American support for European painters, going back to Renoir, Degas and the great Impressionists. Through them, Hugo is rightly achieving the international fame and renown that he undoubtedly deserves. If I was asked to describe Hugo's work in one word I think it would have to be "beautiful". I close with the famous first lines of *Endymion* and let Keats have the last word.

—Michael Crowe

“A thing of beauty is a joy forever: Its loveliness increases; it will never pass into nothingness...”



FINDLAY GALLERIES

For further information and pricing of
these artworks please contact the gallery:

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