

FINDLAY GALLERIES



# CHARLES NEAL

THE UNFOLDING OF A VISION

A COMMISSIONED COLLECTION OF PAINTINGS OF

# BLenheim PALACE

A WORLD HERITAGE SITE  
A COMMISSIONED COLLECTION OF PAINTINGS

BY CHARLES NEAL  
*The Unfolding of a Vision*

FINDLAY GALLERIES  
*Presents*



BLenheim PALACE







**M**y wife and I are delighted to be with you in New York for the Exhibition of Charles Neal's paintings of Blenheim. We are extremely grateful to Findlay Galleries and Jimmy Borynack for staging this fundraising event and reception in aid of the Blenheim Foundation. This will help enormously with the ongoing restoration needed to ensure the future of Blenheim for future generations who visit from all over the world.

*Charles Neal*



*Duke & Duchess of Marlborough*





I am so delighted to introduce to you the exhibition of paintings by the talented artist Charles Neal, titled 'Blenheim Palace in New York', all of which are of Blenheim Palace and Park. The paintings have been painstakingly researched and created by Charles over a three-year period specifically for Blenheim and we are thrilled with the results. He has a unique perspective on this World Heritage Site and Historic Palace.

I am very grateful to James Borynack and the team at Findlay Galleries for their enthusiasm and continuing support of The Blenheim Foundation. I hope you will enjoy these magnificent paintings for many years to come. My family and I very much appreciate your support and look forward to welcoming you at Blenheim to appreciate the beauty first-hand.

The Blenheim Foundation was established in 1985 with a £1.5m endowment from my family and I have been delighted to fully support and endorse its valuable work since that time. While the Foundation has undertaken much valuable work at Blenheim Palace, the list of required repairs can sometimes seem endless. The most recent appraisal of the "Wants of Repair" of the Palace and Park is approximately £41m and, with conservation skills becoming increasingly rare, the cost of this can only rise.

Much has been achieved by the Foundation but much remains to be done in order to preserve and protect the historical and artistic tradition

that Blenheim Palace represents. The long-term target remains to create an endowment in excess of £15m – the fund currently stands at around £10m. There remains therefore, a challenging gap to secure the long-term target and achieve the level of endowment required. Unlike all other UK World Heritage Sites, Blenheim Palace attracts no public funding so the task of preserving and restoring it falls squarely upon my family. It is a task we relish and will work tirelessly to achieve with fundraising events on both sides of the Atlantic.

The early part of the 21st century has seen a succession of symbolic anniversaries as the victories of my illustrious ancestor, John Churchill, are remembered and celebrated. In 2015 we commemorated the 50th anniversary of Sir Winston Churchill's death by creating a Memorial Garden in his memory. Designed by Landscape architect Kim Wilke and generously funded by the US Blenheim Foundation, to whom we are immensely grateful. In 2016 we celebrated the 300th anniversary of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown's birth and kick off a national programme of events with an exhibition about his work, which featured three paintings by Charles Neal. It was also in 2016 when the Findlay Galleries in Palm Beach held 'The Unfolding of a Vision' and exhibition of commissioned work of which 'Blenheim in New York' is a continuation.

The challenge to restore and preserve Blenheim Palace for future generations of visitors has never been more relevant and, as the sister of the current custodian of this magnificent building and World Heritage Site, I fully commend to you the work of the Blenheim Foundation.

*Lady Henrietta Spencer-Churchill*  
CHAIRMAN OF THE BLENHEIM FOUNDATION





Charles Neal  
CONTEMPORARY  
BRITISH IMPRESSIONIST



# THE UNFOLDING OF A VISION

‘Blenheim Palace in New York’ is a continuation of the first exhibition held at Findlay Galleries Palm Beach Gallery in 2016, entitled ‘The Unfolding of a Vision’ which featured a collection of paintings capturing the essence and historical significance of what has become such an iconic symbol of English sensibilities. The Palm Beach exhibition was in support of the Blenheim Foundation and was opened by Her Grace the 12th Duchess of Marlborough and Lady Henrietta Spencer-Churchill: daughter of the late 11th Duke of Marlborough. This second exhibition continues in the same manner and celebrates the social fusion and resultant reaction and influence of these American family connections to Blenheim, procured by the various marriages of New York society women (during the period of late 1800’s to early 1900’s) to members of the Marlborough family.

George Charles the 8th Duke, married his second wife, the widow Lilian Hammersley who became the 8th Duchess. Their marriage at the City Hall, New York City in 1888, was witnessed by Leonard Jerome. Secondly; the marriage of Randolph Henry Spencer Churchill, second son of the 7th Duke, to Jennie Jerome daughter of Leonard and Clara Jerome whose father was a New York Stockbroker. The special historic importance of this marriage was the fact that Winston Churchill was born at Blenheim Palace on 30th November, 1874 in a small bedroom arranged in haste, just off the Great Hall. The most notable of the marriages to take place was between Charles Richard the 9th Duke and Consuelo Vanderbilt, daughter of William and Alva Vanderbilt at St. Thomas Episcopal Church, New York City on November 6th, 1895.

From the perspective of changes to the architectural and landscape appearance of Blenheim; it was the marriage between Charles the 9th Duke and Consuelo Vanderbilt that produced the synergy and enthusiasm necessary to ensure the future of Blenheim Palace. The alterations and consequential transformation to Blenheim were the most radical and far reaching since Capability Brown’s landscaping of the Parkland and Great Court, started in 1764 at the invitation of George Spencer, the 4th Duke of Marlborough. The 9th Duke set to work on numerous projects, resulting in the convergence of aesthetic expressions that had already been made and new ideas and schemes envisioned. Firstly; Charles reinstated the Great Court designed by Sir John Vanburgh, adding a parapet to the exterior elevation of the Great Hall. He also added to the scheme a sunken wall with great iron gates. The lake was dredged and the estate planted with a half a million trees to supplement Capability Brown’s planting scheme. The interior was equally considered in that the State Rooms were re-gilded by French decorators specially employed from Paris. The East Garden which was the 8th Duke’s Italianate Garden was redesigned with scrolled topiary and the introduction of the gilded bronze Naiad Fountain, sculpted by the American Sculptor, Waldo Story, who was an acquaintance of the Vanderbilt family circle of friends. The creation of the Water Terraces on the west front was a major undertaking requiring skill provided by the French Architect, Achille Duchene. This harmonious integration of two aesthetic schools of thought was achieved by the determination of the 9th Duke. Blenheim was one of the last two gardens to express the revival of French and Italian schools, which had been so fashionable throughout the Edwardian period here in Britain, Europe and America.

The collection of paintings in this exhibition captures the grandeur of the Palace and Parkland at Blenheim. This only became possible through the fusion of American and English perspectives.





*Queen Pool, November* · oil on canvas · 30 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 72 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches · FG© 136889





Blenheim Palace was the gift of Queen Anne and a grateful nation to the first Duke of Marlborough for his great victory at the Battle of Blenheim in 1704. Every where the Palace's design reflects this triumphal mood, from the military details of the trophies on the colonnades to the scale of the heroic Grand Bridge. The dramatic effect harmonizes perfectly with Capability Brown's great lake and hanging beech woods beyond. It all looks so effortlessly natural but in fact the scene was artfully and laboriously created between 1764 and 1774. Today, Blenheim Palace is not only an iconic part of history, but also a living, changing experience with a wealth of sporting and cultural events throughout the year. This collection of paintings by British Contemporary Charles Neal strikingly captures the beauty and essence of this remarkable Palace.







The Italian Garden was created by the seventh Duke in order to establish a formal garden setting, in contrast to the previous arrangement of roses and shrubs. Subsequently, the ninth Duke remodeled the Italian Garden initially introducing the Naiad Fountain created by Thomas Waldo Story, which was placed in the garden in 1899. From 1904, the ninth Duke had further revised the garden and had instructed the French architect



Achille Duchêne to make extensive additions, which were completed in 1908. This Alter Realist composition focuses on the visual relationship of the Naiad, {water-nymph} and the Ducal Coronet. The background field is deliberately diminished and elements of the planting and sculpture are cut out to emphasis the ambiance of power and grandeur.

Top:

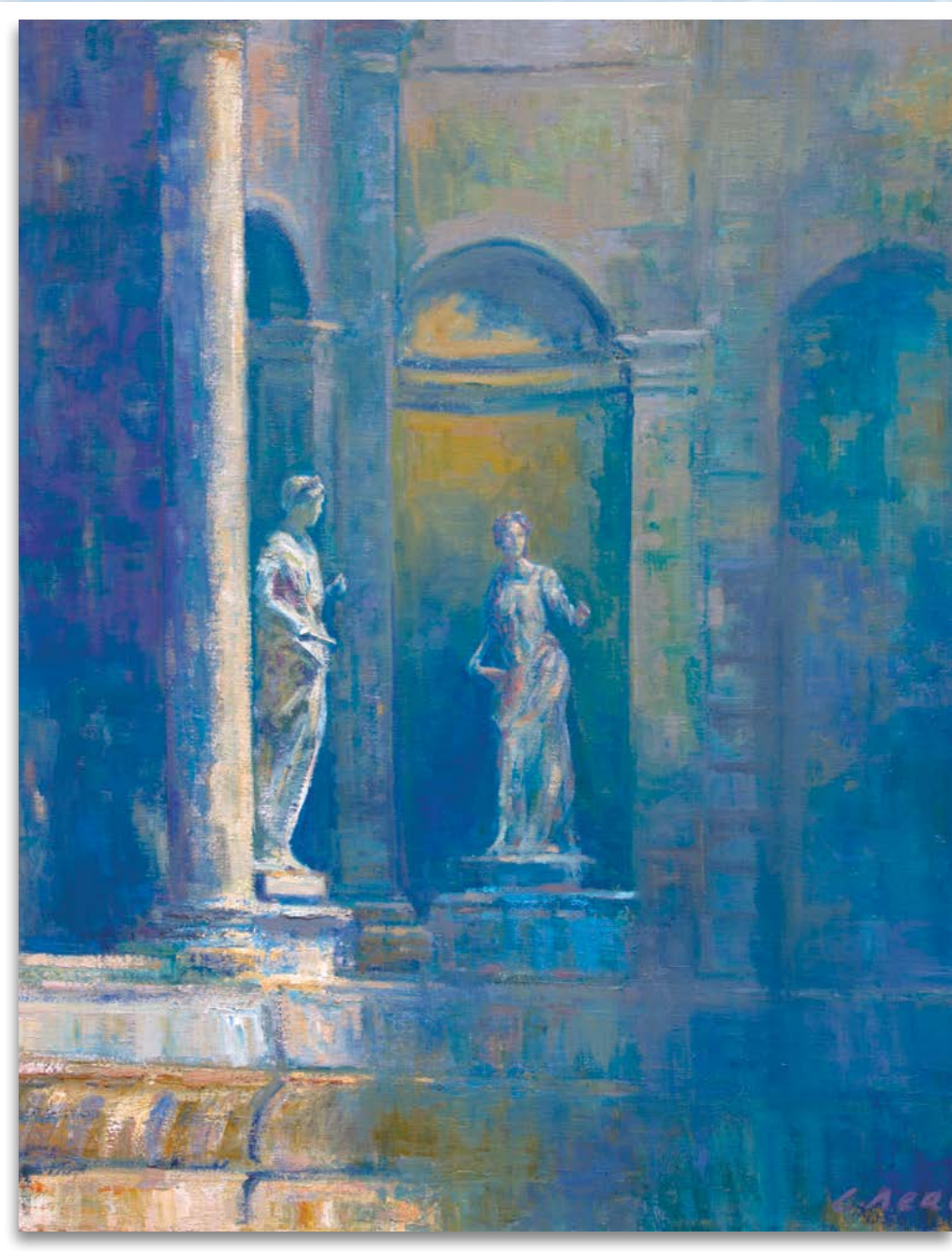
*The Naiad and the Ducal Coronet* · oil on canvas · 40 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 60 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches · FG© 136894

The Alter Realist composition merges the statue of Venus Capua and the fountain, with a bounding, stylised curtain of water - this representing the energy of the fountain jet and spray. The narrative celebrates water as one of the fundamental energies and a life giving source.

*Joy means the Birth of Everything; of the Spirit of Hope and Aspiration, Charles, 9th Duke- The Upper Water Terrace*  
oil on canvas · 48 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 48 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches · FG© 136915







The subject and compositional visual balance point explore the relationship between Venus of Capua and the poses and gestures of the surrounding statues. The particular selected visual alignment of the fountain jet and Venus within the composition exudes a sense of joy and playfulness, touching on the sentiments intended by Charles, 9th Duke.

*The Conversation - The Great Court* · oil on canvas · 48 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 40 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches · FG© 136917





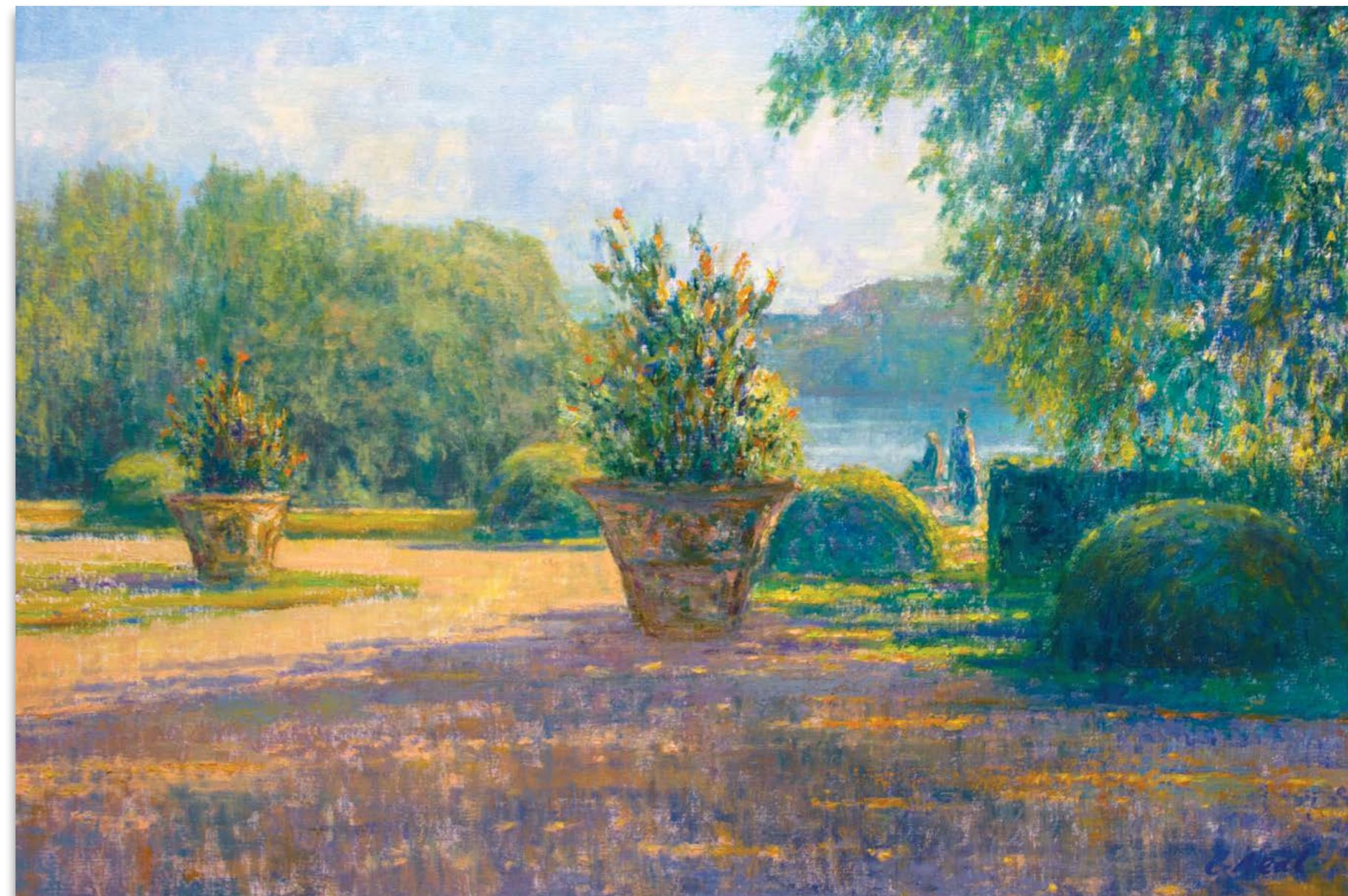
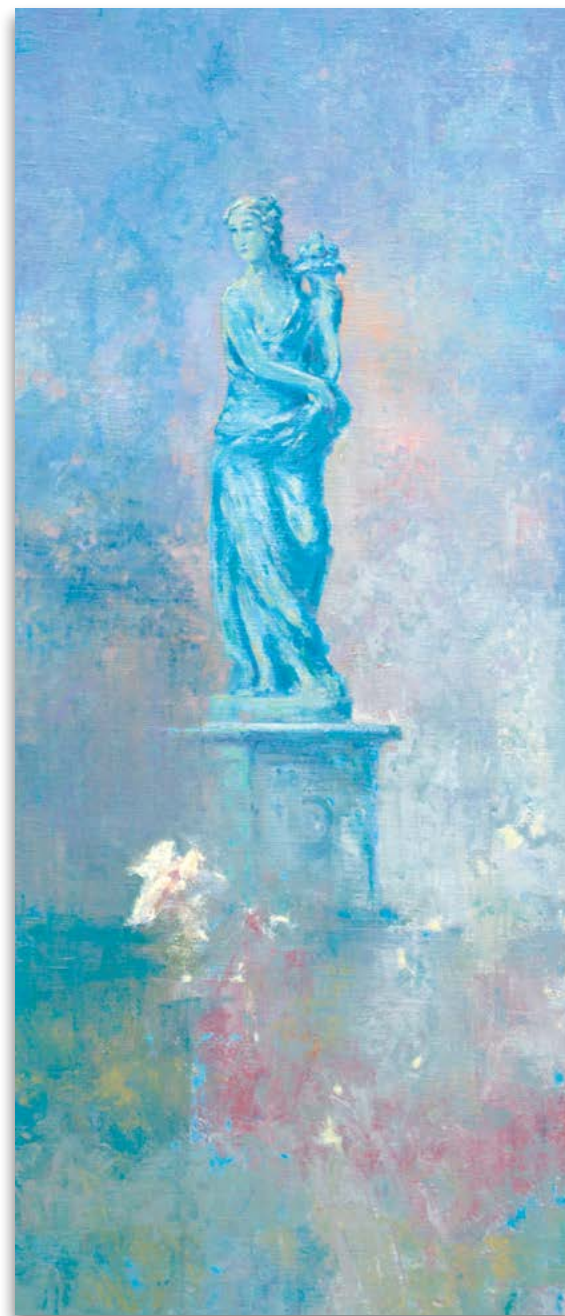
The Lower Water Terrace was inspired to be an Italianate Garden to be compared with Versailles. The large terracotta planters being planted with the flame orange of Canna flowers add to this grand statement.

The backdrop of Capability Brown's Great Lake further contributed to this sense of grandeur.

The 9th Duke took great interest in the scheme, especially in harmonising the aesthetic value of the Palace Water Terrace and Brown's landscaping, in order that all blended harmoniously.

LEFT PAGE *Abundance - The Orangery* · oil on canvas · 48 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 18 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches · FG© 136934

RIGHT PAGE *The Viewpoint - Lower Water Terrace* · oil on canvas · 32 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 48 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches · FG© 136922

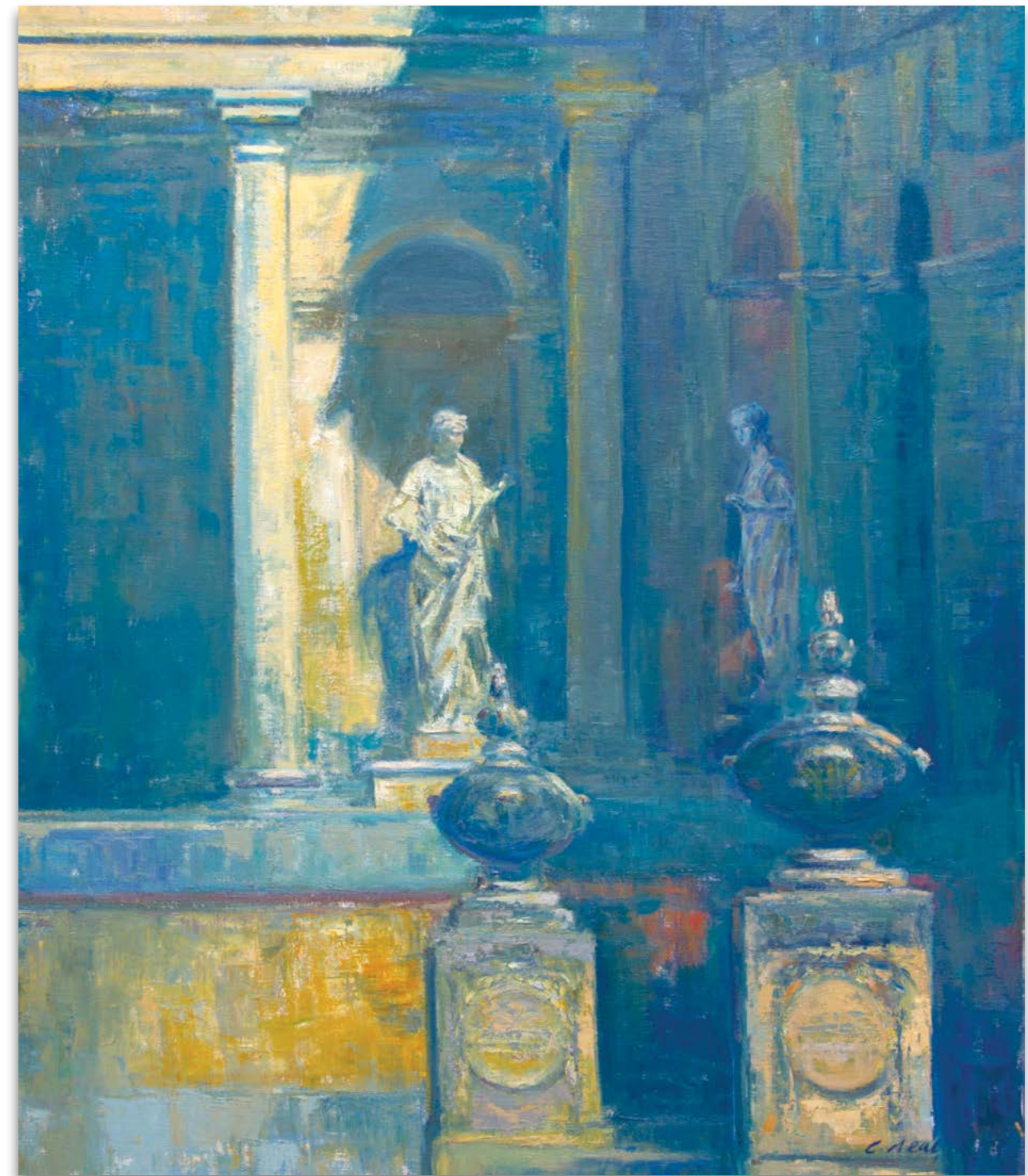




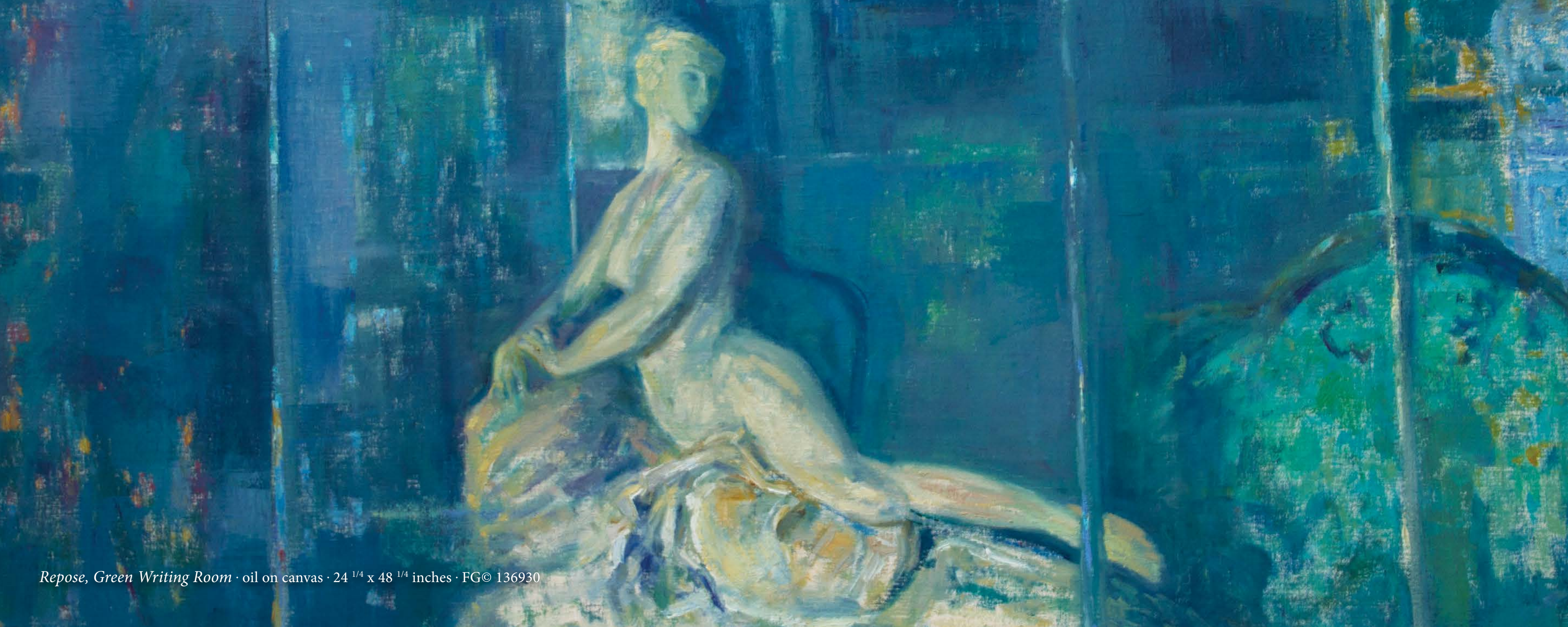


In the 1920s, the 9th Duke engaged the French architect Achille Duchêne to revert the Great Court from its Brownian scheme of lawns, back to Vanbrugh's original design, using paving and gravel areas. In carrying out the revision, terracotta statues were reinstated on either side of the pediment above the entrance to the house as illustrated in early engravings and used for reference. In 2008, due to weather damage, the statues were placed in niches along the Great Court colonnades, and new copies placed on the pediments. The dramatic light creates an energy and a sense of animation to the classical poses of the figures. The cast shadows remind us of the transience of time in the momentary present.

*Afternoon Light - The Great Court* · oil on canvas · 48 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 40 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches · FG© 136919

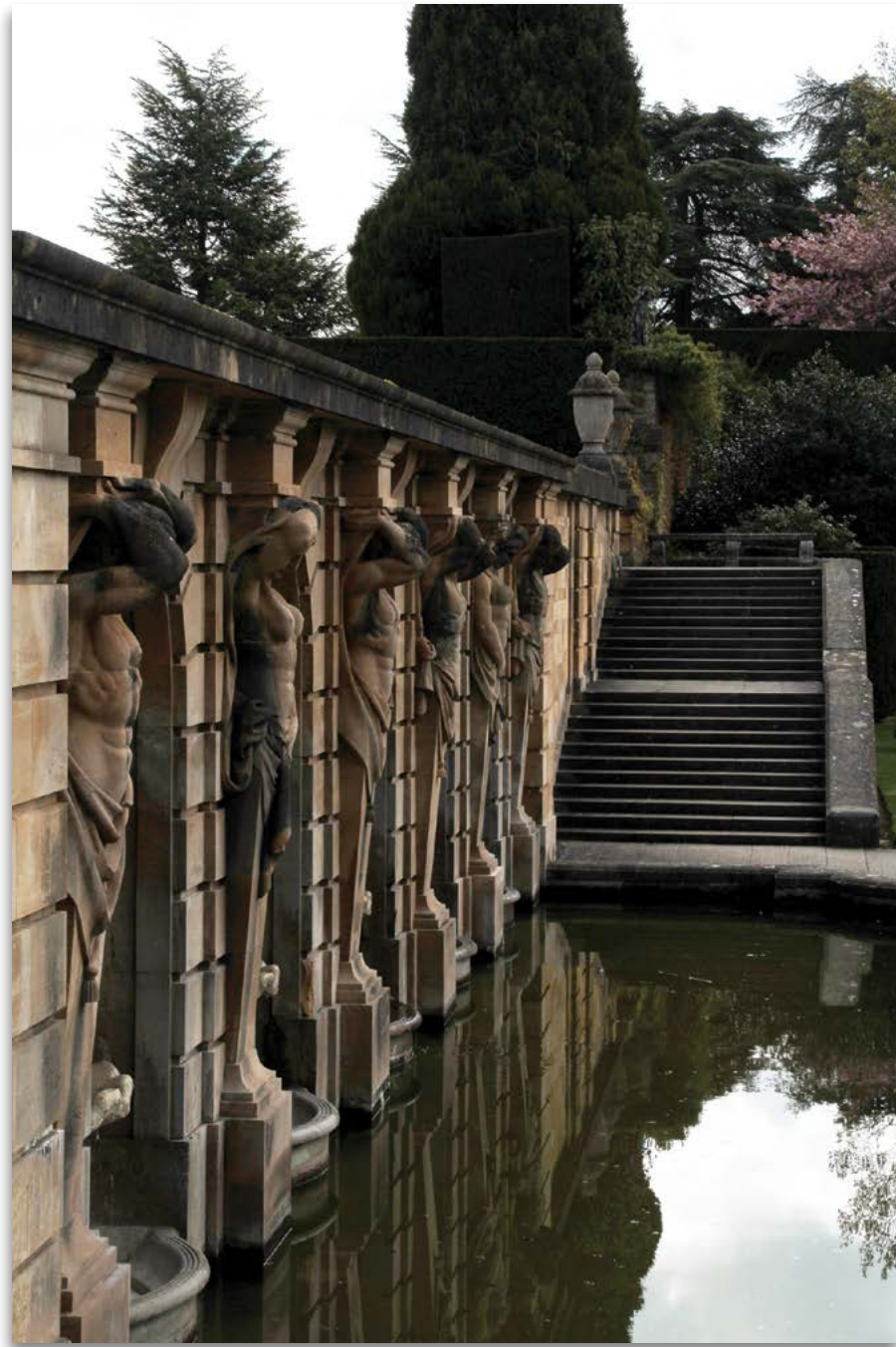






*Repose, Green Writing Room* · oil on canvas · 24 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 48 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches · FG© 136930

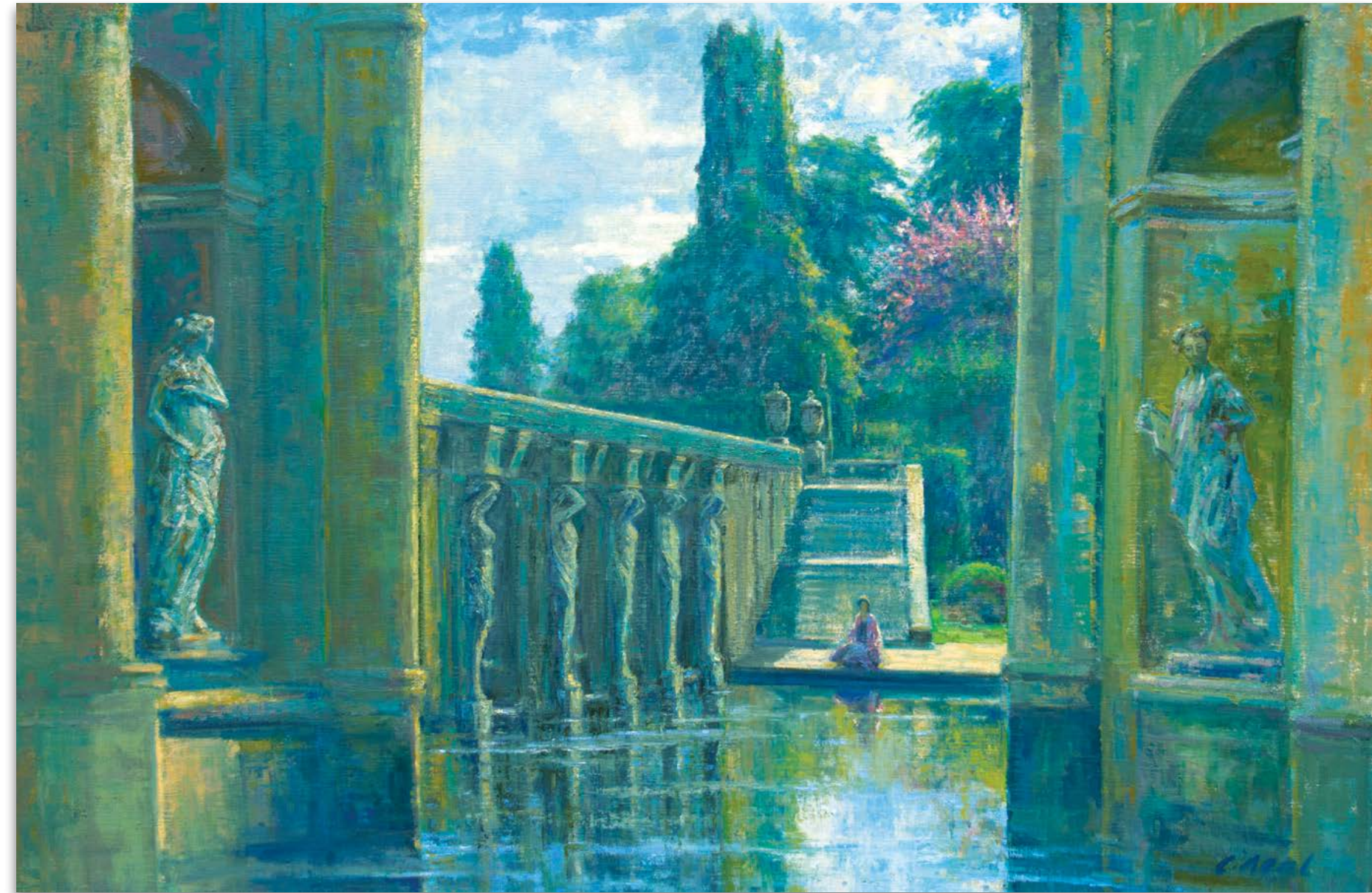




The Alter – Realist compositional narrative relates to two separate aspects of the Palace – the Great Court and the Lower Water Terrace.

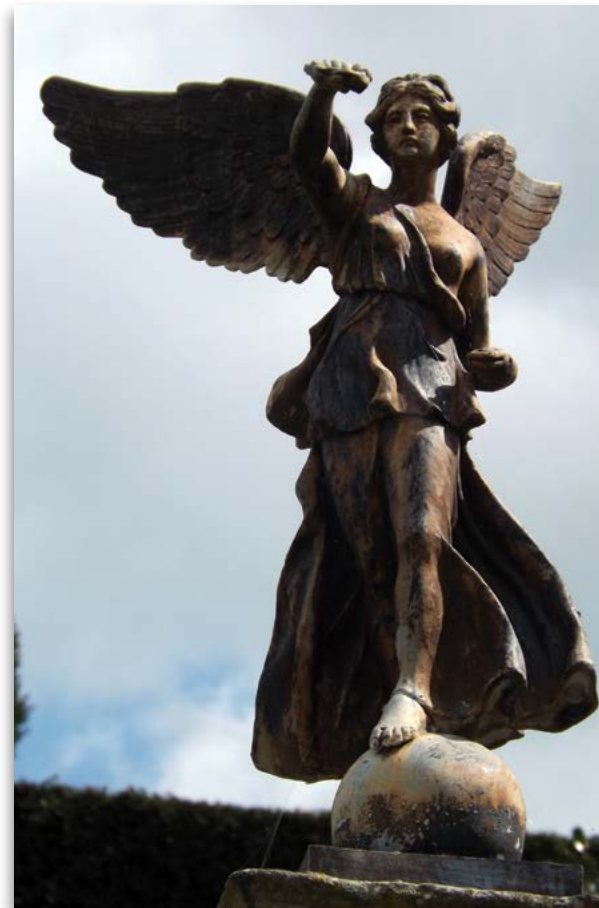
The Caryatids that collectively support the heavy wall structure represent mankind's collective history and the associated wisdom and experience that upholds our present material being. The right hand figure engages with our observation and thereby invites the viewer to participate. She holds a book signifying the pages of the future yet to be written. The left hand figure looks on into the scene as if she is the future presence. The pool in which the woman peers into represents the timeless, undetermined future to which the seated woman casts her dreams.

*The Pool of Dreams, Alter - Realism*  
oil on canvas · 40 1/4 x 60 1/4 inches · FG© 136898





*Victory - En Plein Air*  
 oil on panel  
 23 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 11 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches  
 FG© 136942



Two narratives form the composition - these being; the distant act of conflict, in the stance of the Gladiator, and Victory in the foreground. The late afternoon light connects the two descriptive elements, thereby relating present and future tense through the juxtaposition of the classical poses.

## BLENHEIM GARDENS

Sometimes, when a new house is built, the design of the grounds is left until later, but not at Blenheim Palace. “The Garden Wall was set agoing the same day with the House,” John Vanbrugh, English architect and dramatist, reported to the first Duke shortly after the Palace’s foundation stone was laid in 1705. From the start Marlborough showed a strong personal interest in the construction of Blenheim Palace’s gardens. His gardener, Henry Wise, realising that the Duke might not live to see the garden in its maturity (in fact he only spent two summers at the Palace), transplanted full grown trees in baskets to achieve the desired early maturity. Following the fashion at that time, Wise decreed that everything within sight of the house should be formal, regular and symmetrical.

Tastes changed later in the 18th century and much of Vanbrugh and Wise’s splendid original park and gardens were ‘naturalized’ by ‘Capability’ Brown. His picturesque approach was to present a landscape that appeared natural but was in fact nature contrived to pleasing effect. Brown realized the capabilities of Blenheim Palace by creating the sublime lake and cunningly planned vistas with ornamental clumps and fringes of trees.

At the start of the last century, however, the ninth Duke decided to give Vanbrugh’s Palace the formal setting he thought it deserved. Between 1900 and 1910, with the help of the French landscape architect, Achille Duchêne (an admirer of Louis XIV’s great landscapist Le Nôtre), he undertook the enormous task of restoring the 1.2 hectare (3-acre) forecourt, which had been grassed over by Brown, with cobbles and gravel. He also renovated the entire gardens on the East and West fronts, resulting in the Italian

*Adaptation, Consuelo, Ninth Duchess* · oil on panel · 24 x 11 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> inches · FG© 136944







The concept for the Water Terrace was initiated by the 9th Duke, and the scheme designed and carried out by the French architect, Achille Duchêne in conjunction with the Duke. Following completion of the Water Terraces, the 9th Duke added two gladiatorial statues and six Winged Victories to the Lower Terrace as a reminder of the 1st Duke's military career and achievements.

*The Gladiator* · oil on canvas · 40 1/8 x 54 1/8 inches · FG© 136912







The stillness of the moment at the closing of the day, along with the rested stance of Hermes, invites the viewer to join in contemplation. The diminishing light emphasises the sense of transience of Cosmic Order, we, like Hermes, can only be observers.

*The Contemplation of Hermes* · oil on canvas · 24 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 48 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches · FG© 136929

C. Neal

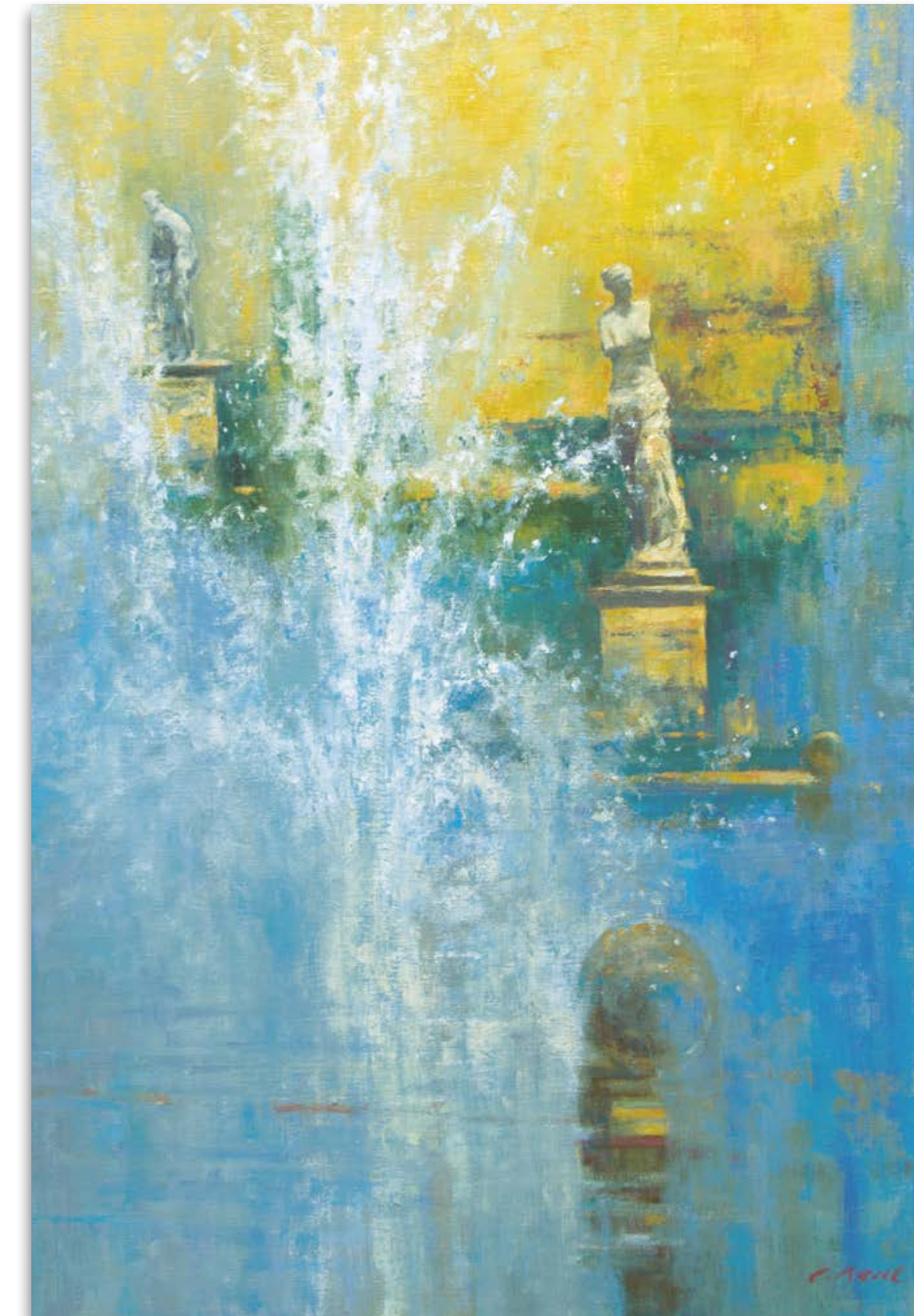
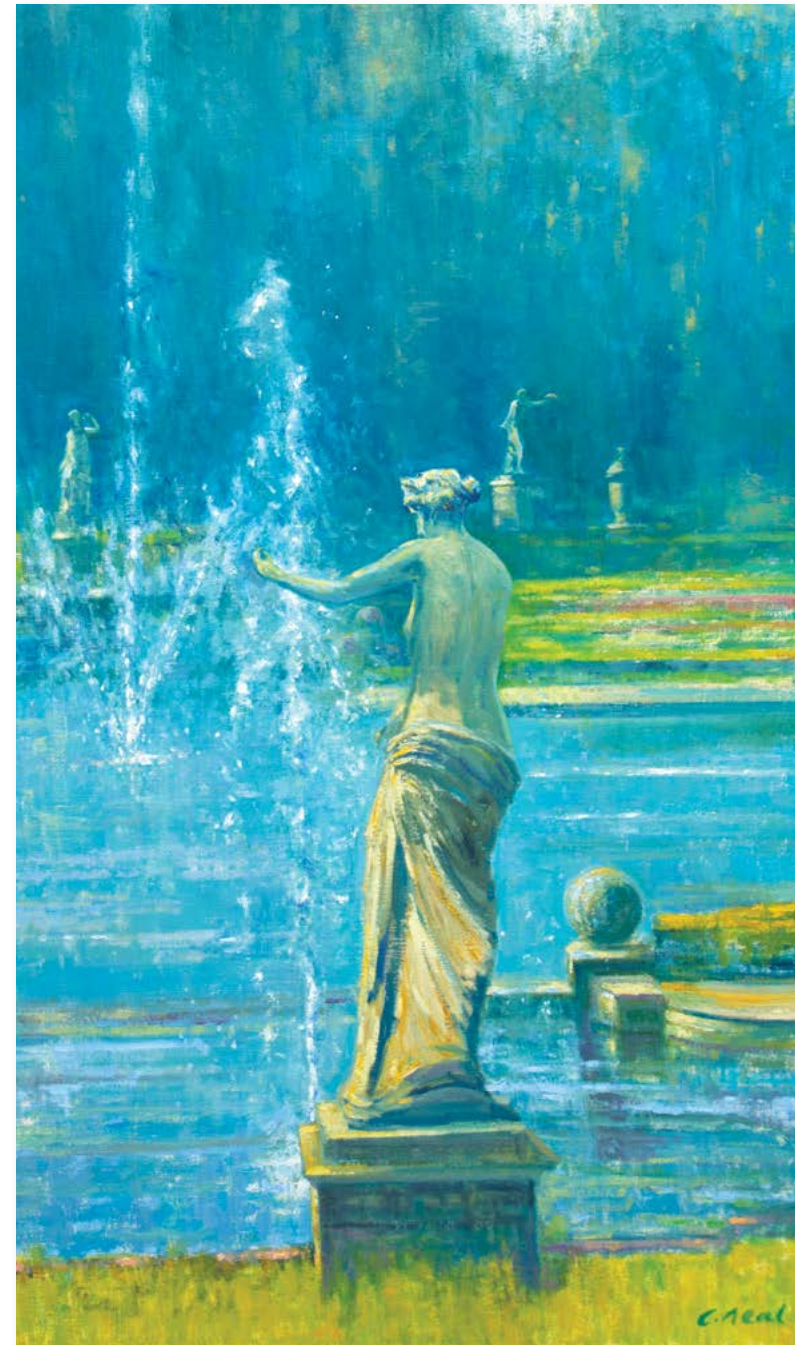




The fountains were introduced to the water basin by the tenth Duke, a concept of moving water proposed by the ninth Duke's architect, Achille Duchêne, in order to create dynamic energy to the appearance of the Water Terrace, (the ninth Duke was not convinced). Albeit, both aesthetic considerations have their particular visual merits. The composition utilises the sense of movement and resulting energy and the dissolving of form through spray, alluding to an ethereal setting wherein the mythological figures have their presence. The sphere, which is part of the water terrace scheme, can be envisioned as the World, furthering the emphasis of a mythological realm.

LEFT *The Birth of Joy, The Upper Water Terrace* · oil on canvas · 60 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 40 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches · FG© 136895

FAR LEFT *Venus and Hermes - Upper Water Terrace* · oil on canvas · 48 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 36 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches · FG© 136920



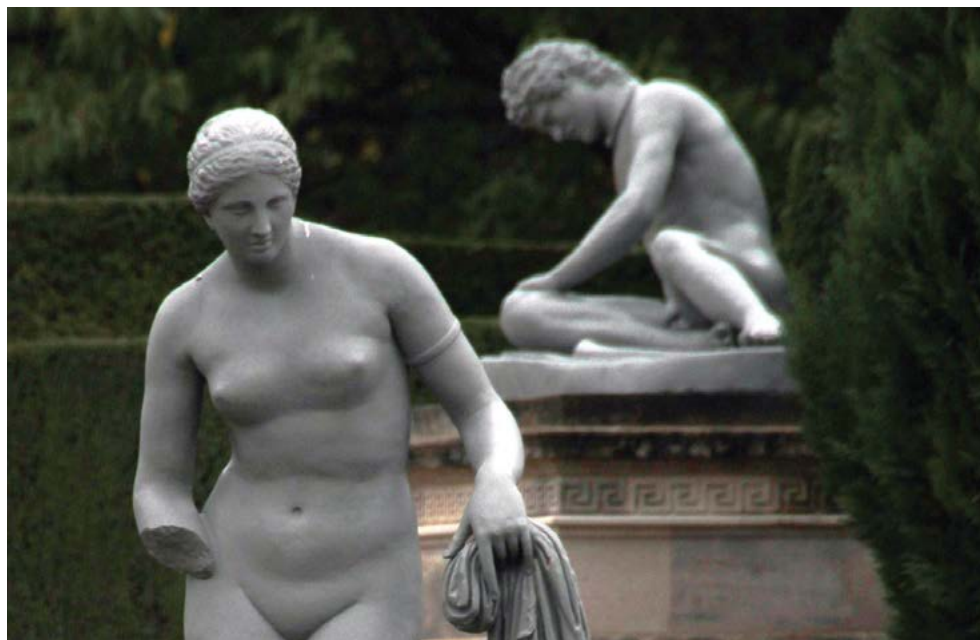




The late afternoon light merges the details of the Water Terrace. Shafts of sunlight highlight the statuary, these being: the 'Winged Victory', Sphinxes, the Townley Venus and the Caryatids. The limpidity of the water, which the ninth Duke was emphatic to see, combined with the corresponding reflections, give rise (in his words) to 'a certain air'.

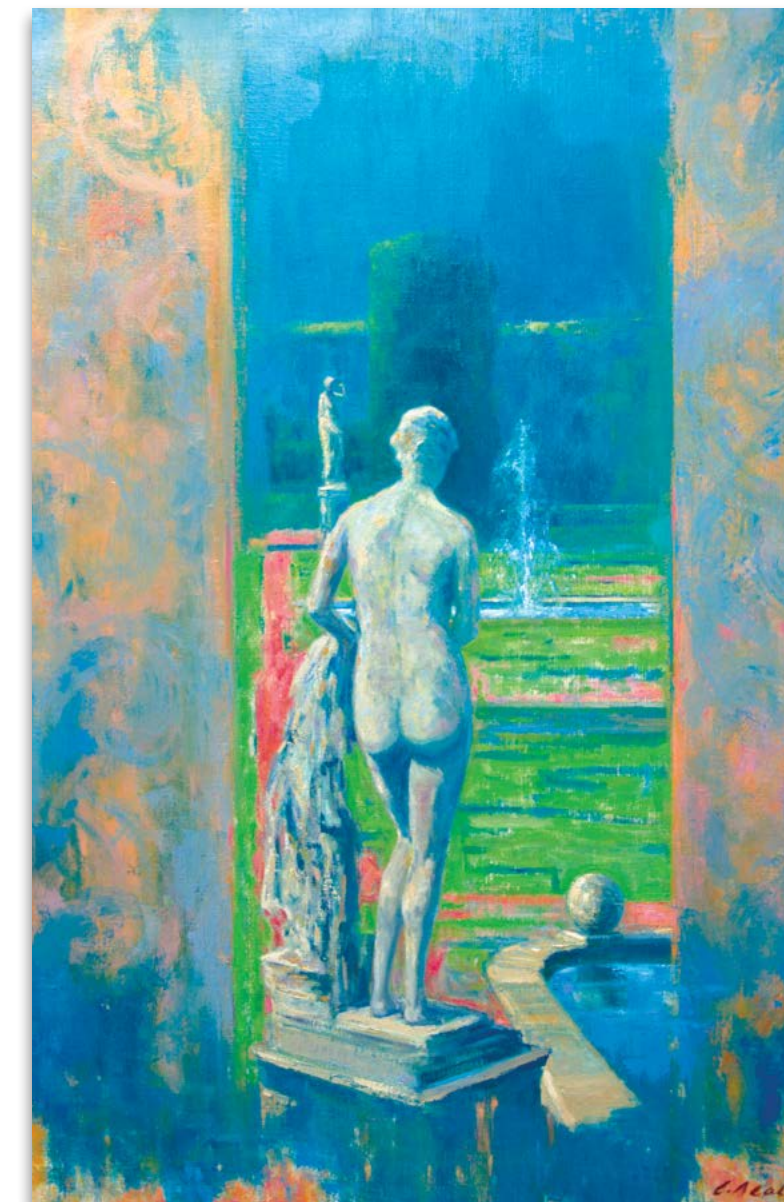
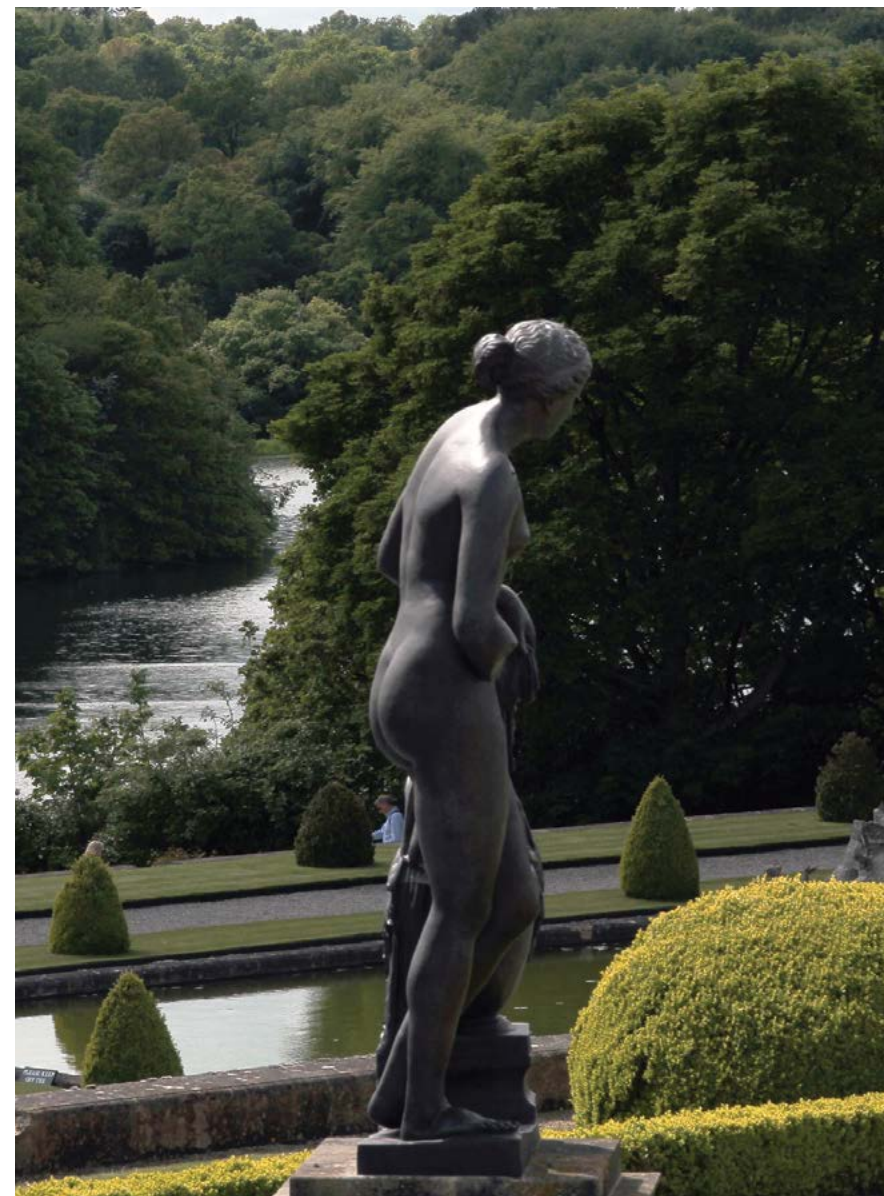
*Recollection - Lower Water Terrace* · oil on canvas · 42 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 54 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches · FG© 136911





The Alter – Realism composition explores the solidity and transience of reality, by method of juxtaposing the central subject of the Water Terrace to the bounding decorative reliefs. The energy and depth of the inner space dissolves at the edges. This helps to create the effect of a veneer.

FAR RIGHT - *The Veneer of Reality* · 60 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 40 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> · inches · FG© 136899







*Arcadia, The Closing of the Day* · oil on canvas · 30 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 60 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches · FG© 136904





The Alter-Realist composition rearranges and juxtaposes key architectural elements of Vanbrugh's Great Court and Grand Bridge, with the creative genius of Capability Brown's lakes; creating a powerful vision of an Arcadian Landscape.

*Lakeside Meadows - Autumn* · oil on canvas · 36 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 72 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches · FG© 136887







*Autumn Colours - Queen Pool* · oil on canvas · 40 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 80 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches · FG© 136882

C. Neal



# THE GREAT HALL

The magnificent 20-metre (67-foot) high Great Hall is one of Blenheim Palace's architectural glories. It is particularly outstanding for Sir James Thornhill's painted ceiling and its stone carvings "cut extraordinary rich and sunk very deep" by Grinling Gibbons and his assistants, who also carved the sumptuous Corinthian capitals and the arms of Queen Anne on the keystone of the main arch.

In Thornhill's painting of 1716, the victorious first Duke of Marlborough is depicted in Roman garb kneeling in front of Britannia, presenting his plan of action at the Battle of Blenheim. Thornhill envisaged the Great Hall as a vast guard room - similar to those at Windsor and Hampton Court - full of dramatic suits of armour, pistols and swords. He went as far as sketching out his ideas, but they never came to fruition.

Above the Saloon door is a bust of the first Duke inscribed in Latin and English. The last line, "Nor could Augustus better calm mankind," was felt by his Duchess Sarah, "to be an exact description of the Dear Duke of Marlborough's temper." The hall doors feature a complicated lock, around which has grown a legend that it was copied from an original on the gates of Warsaw. It is accompanied by a huge, coroneted key.

The long corridors leading to the wings from the north and south sides of the Great Hall are typical of Vanbrugh. So, too, is the staircase concealed by the arcaded eastern wall. Good, simple ironwork supports the handrail and fronts the gallery. Originally a second staircase was planned behind the western wall.



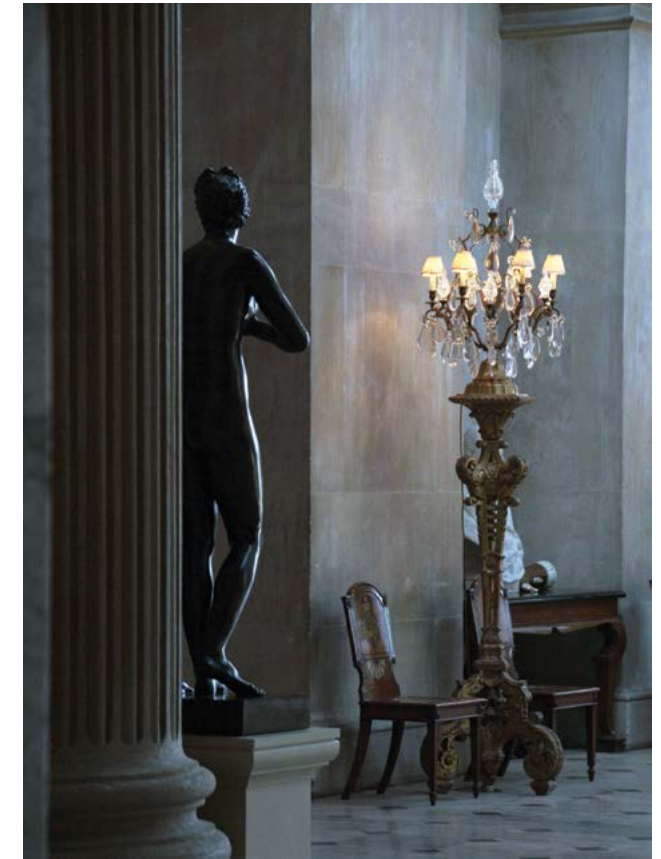
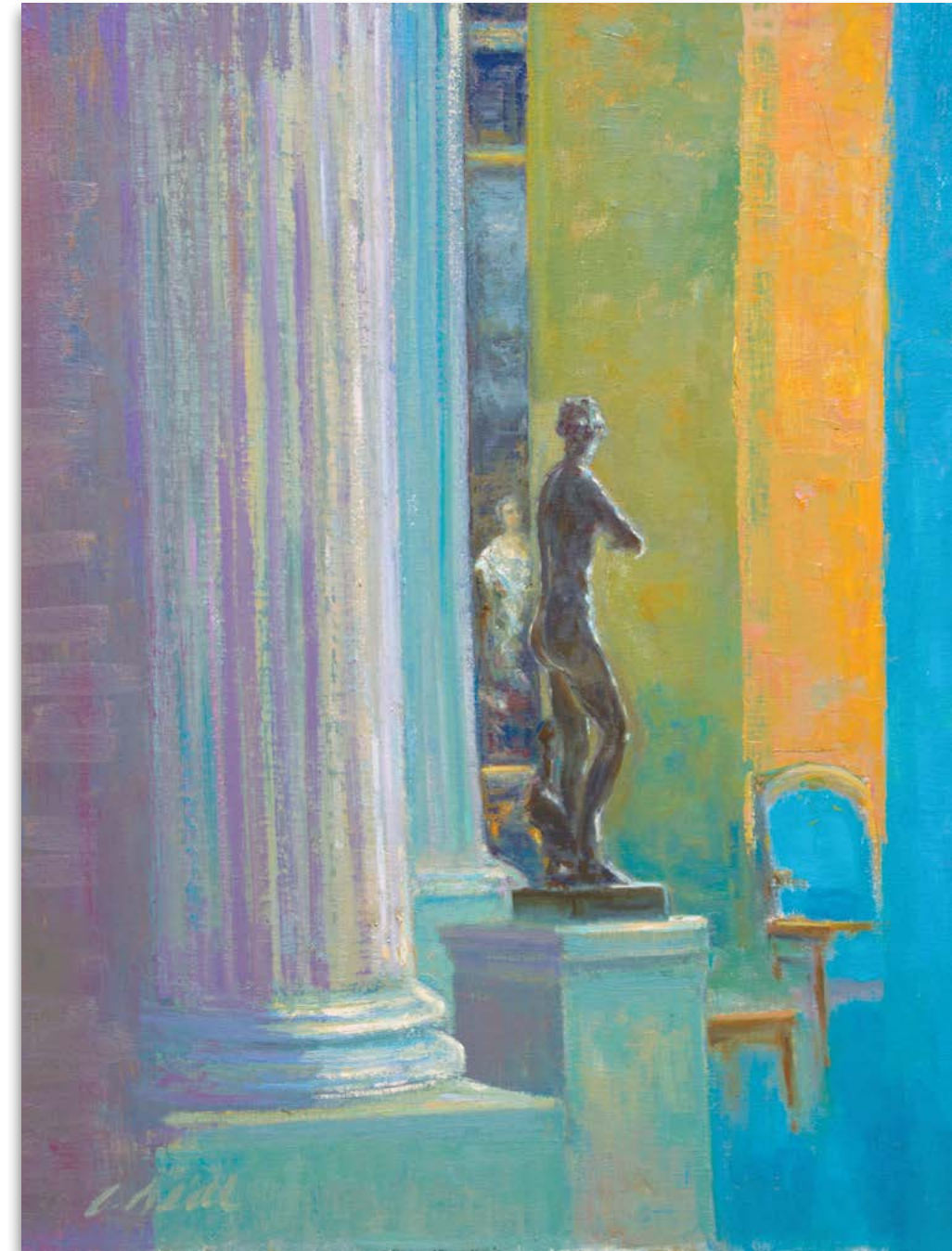
*The Clapping Faun - The Great Hall* · oil on canvas · 48 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 24 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches · FG© 136931







The approach to the subject was to simplify the background details of the Great Hall in order to unify the composition and focus on the relationship between the statue of Venus and the distant inner space of the painting. The colour arrangement was chosen to make a departure from a time associated ambiance of the Great Hall.



*The Medici Venus*

*The Great Hall*

oil on canvas · 30 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 24 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches · FG© 136940





The composition relates three distinctive pieces of sculpture; namely the bust of Alexander the Great (found at a Roman excavation), the Medici bronze of Venus 1711, and the Clapping Faun. These are separated spatially within the Great Hall. Through each artist the pieces capture a unique pose and character, each one representing a worldly reference of the conqueror and the spiritual sphere of the Gods. The visual convergence of these expressions together create a sense of a common narrative. The outer figures turn towards an inner space which gives the effect of curving the picture plane and emphasising the central bust of Alexander the Great and the time in history he represented.

*Legend and Mythology*

*The Great Hall*

oil on canvas · 32 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 48 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches · FG© 136928

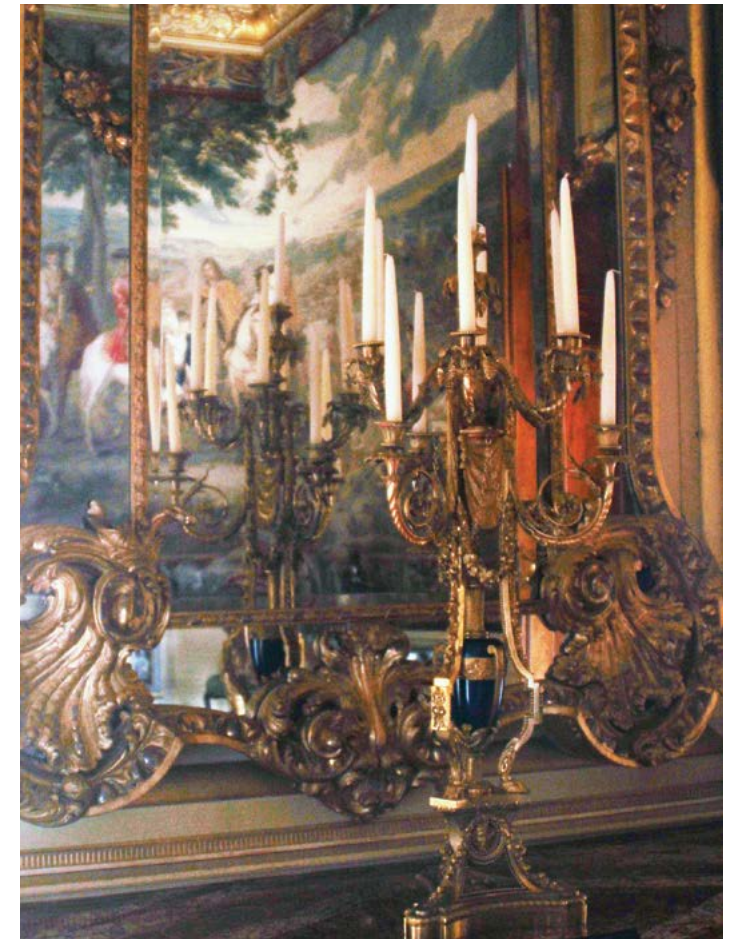
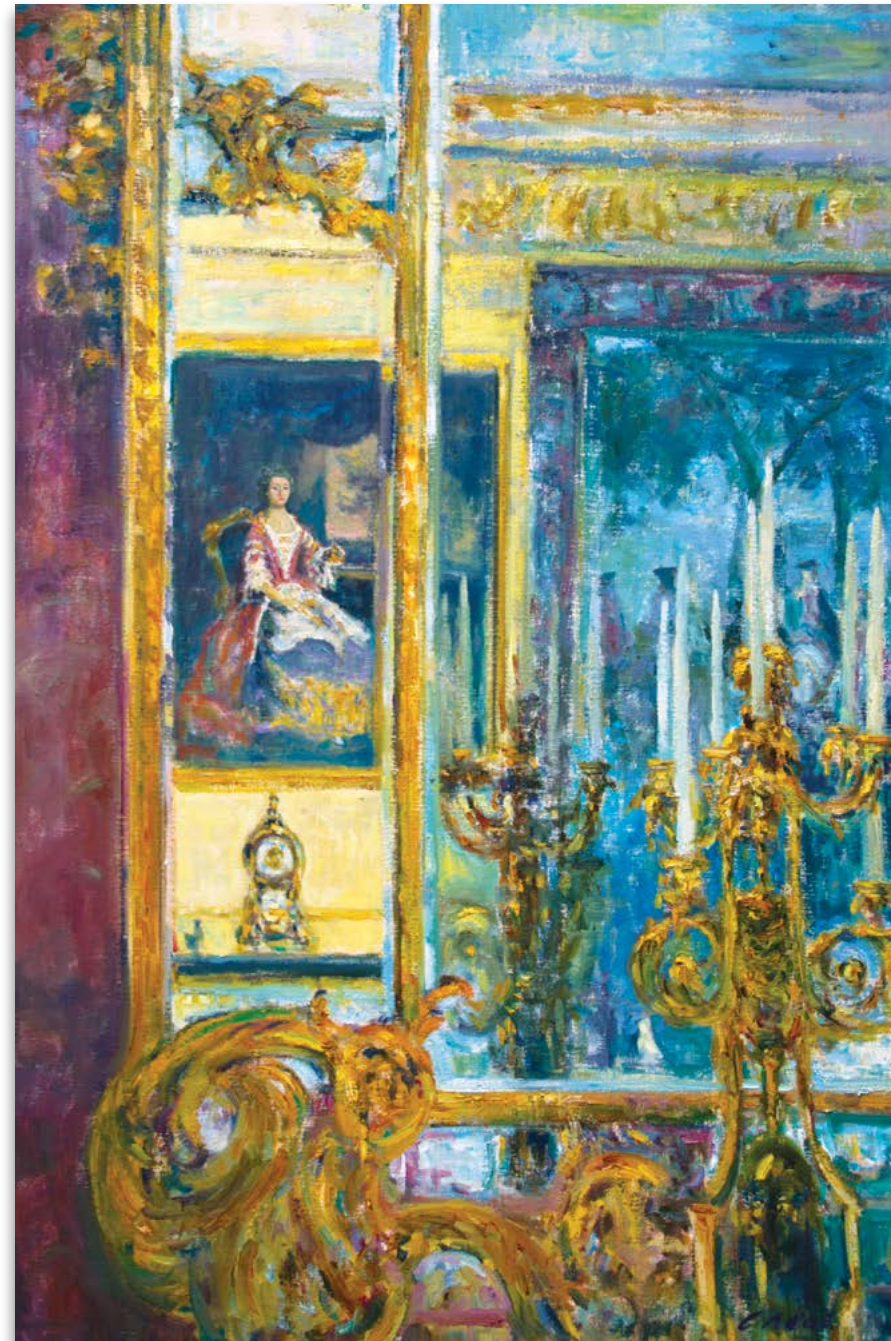
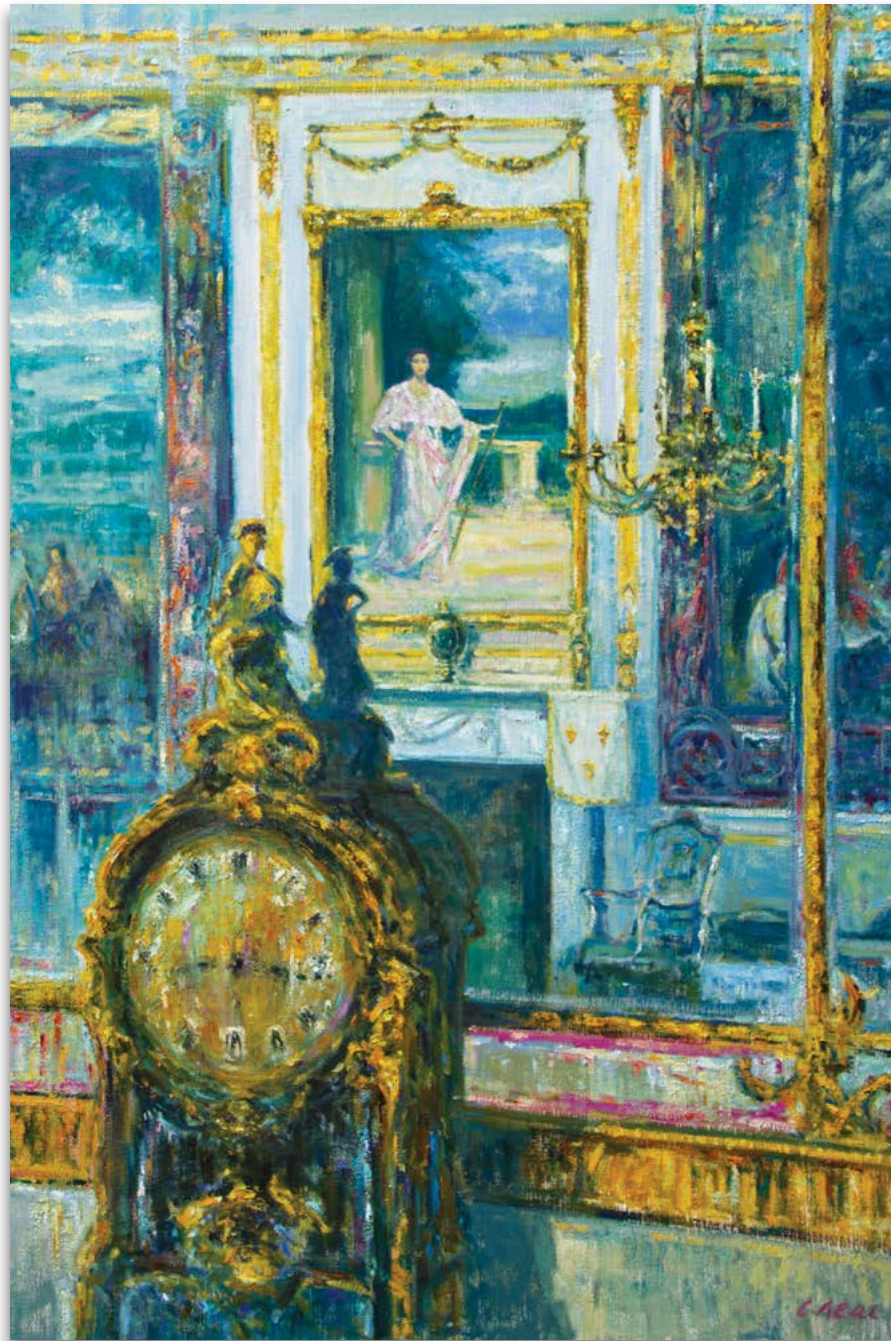






The series of mirror compositions contrasts the material presence of the exterior space outside the mirror's reflective surface, to that of the interior place of the mirror and the reflected world in light. The compression of the State Room within the reflection concentrates the elements of the room, thereby changing their spatial visual connectivity.

*Consuelo, Ninth Duchess, First State Room*  
oil on canvas · 60 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 40 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches · FG© 136896



*Elizabeth, Third Duchess, Green Writing Room*  
oil on canvas · 48 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 32 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches · FG© 136927

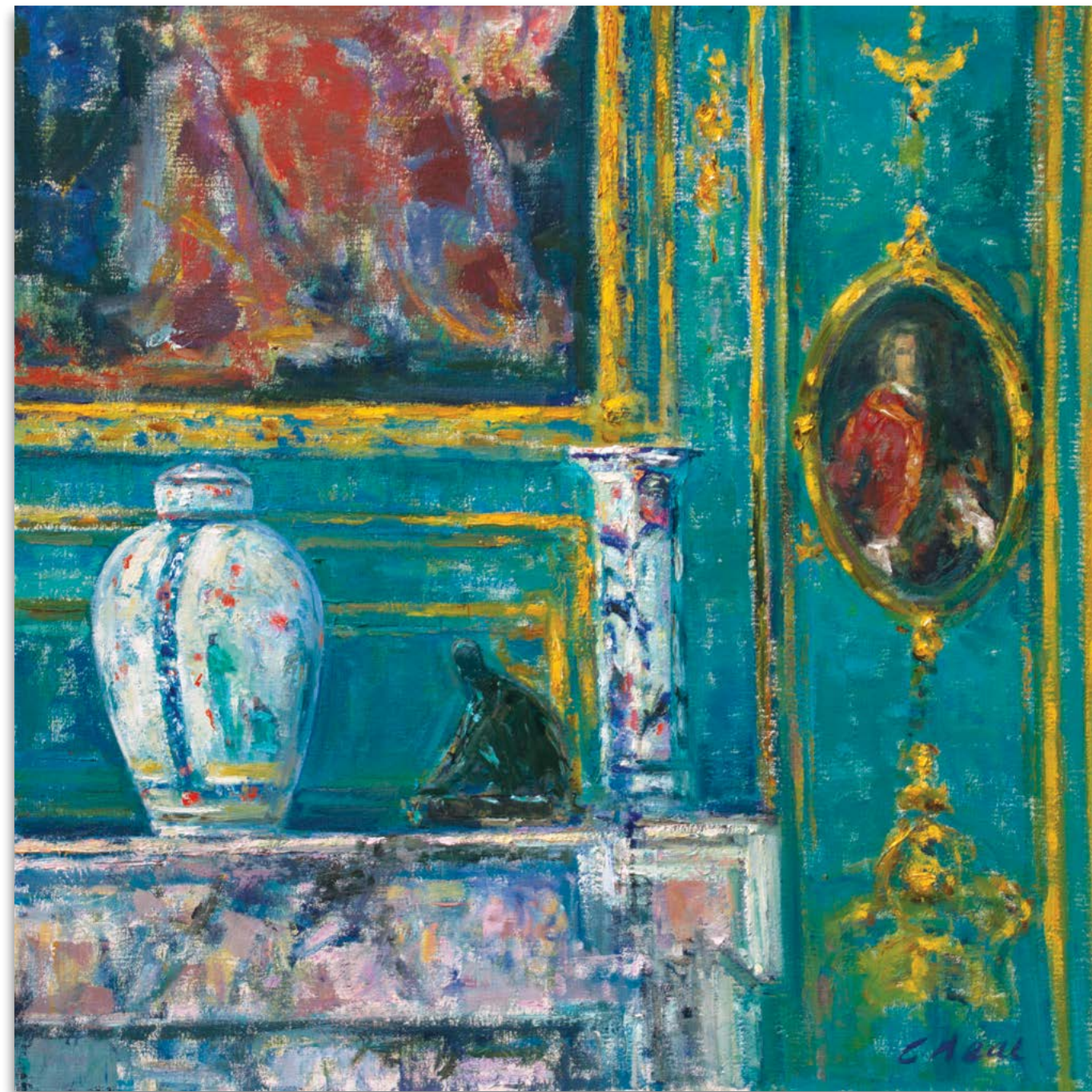




The composition explores the uniqueness of the setting and the spatial relationship between individual objects, (primarily 17th century), providing a rare opportunity to relate to this ambiance. The distinctive pieces such as the Kakiemon vase, (17th Japanese porcelain), a Scythian Slave, (French 17th century bronze), part of the painting by Enoch Seeman's portrait of the 1st Duke studying a plan of Bouchain with his Chief Military Engineer, Colonel Armstrong.

*Interior Composition, Third State Room*

oil on canvas · 30 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 30 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches · FG© 136938







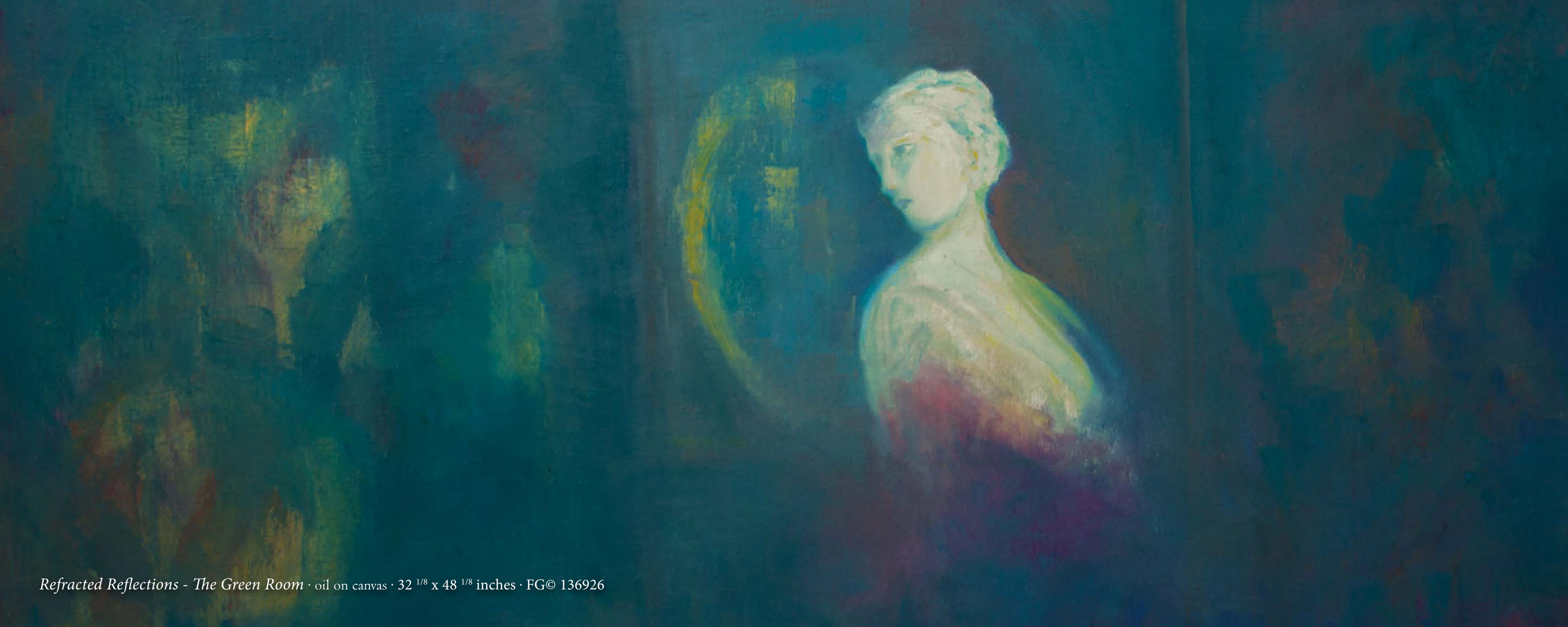
The mirror compositions create a sense of suspension of time, where remnants and affirmations of past events coexist and continually act out. The bevelled glass edging fragments the light thereby further emphasising a sense of parallel timeless existence and meaning.

*The Sun King - Louis XIV*

oil on canvas · 40 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 60 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches · FG© 136901







*Refracted Reflections - The Green Room* · oil on canvas · 32 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 48 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches · FG© 136926



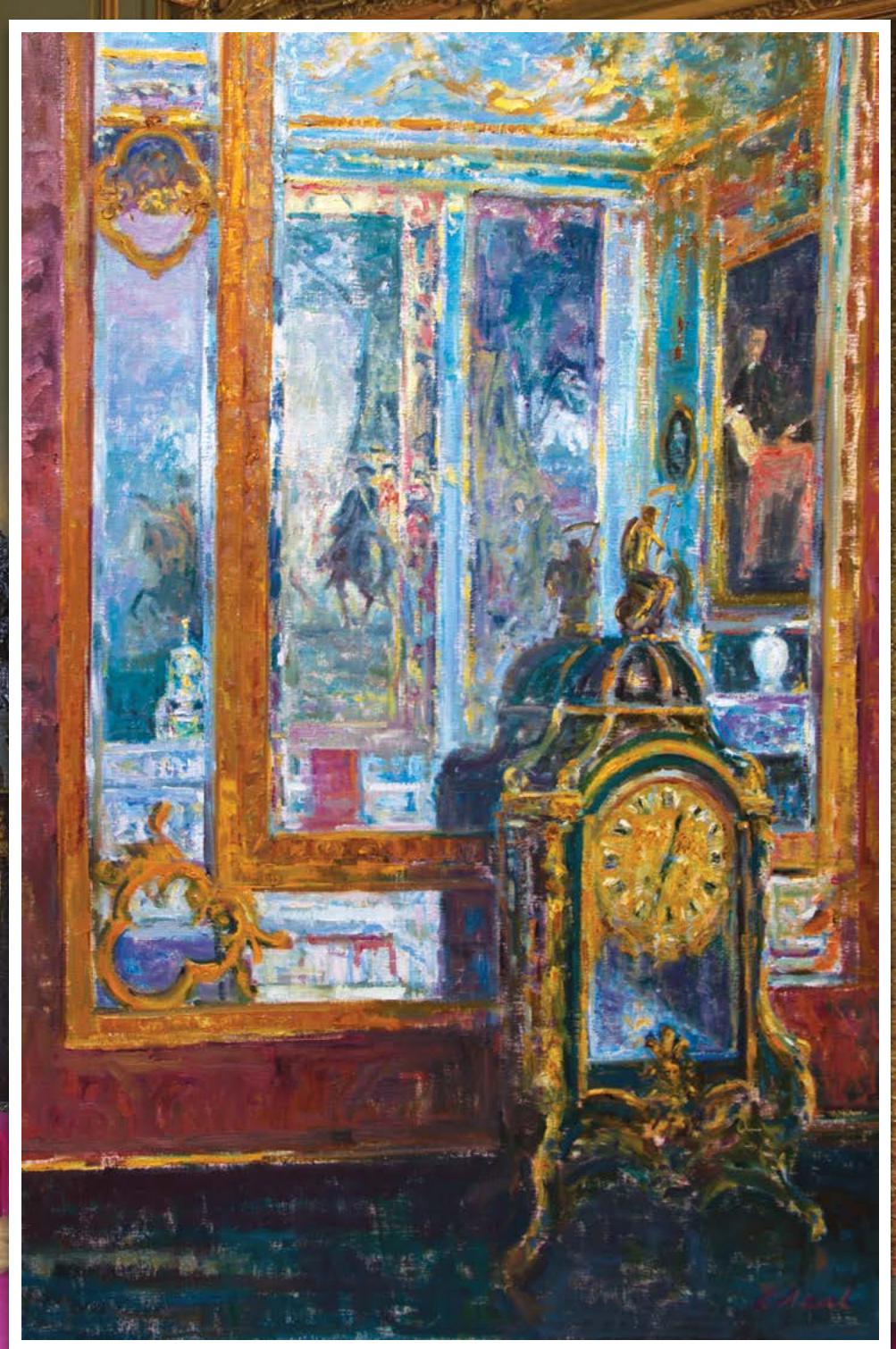


The mirror reflected view captures elements of the tapestries showing Marlborough at Oudenarde in 1708, which depicts him and his comrades in arms engaged in decisive commands. The design of the foreground clock incorporates within its face a scene of night and day, and the gilded figure at its base holds a set of balancing scales. This alludes to a sense of enactment taking place and the consequences balancing out in time.

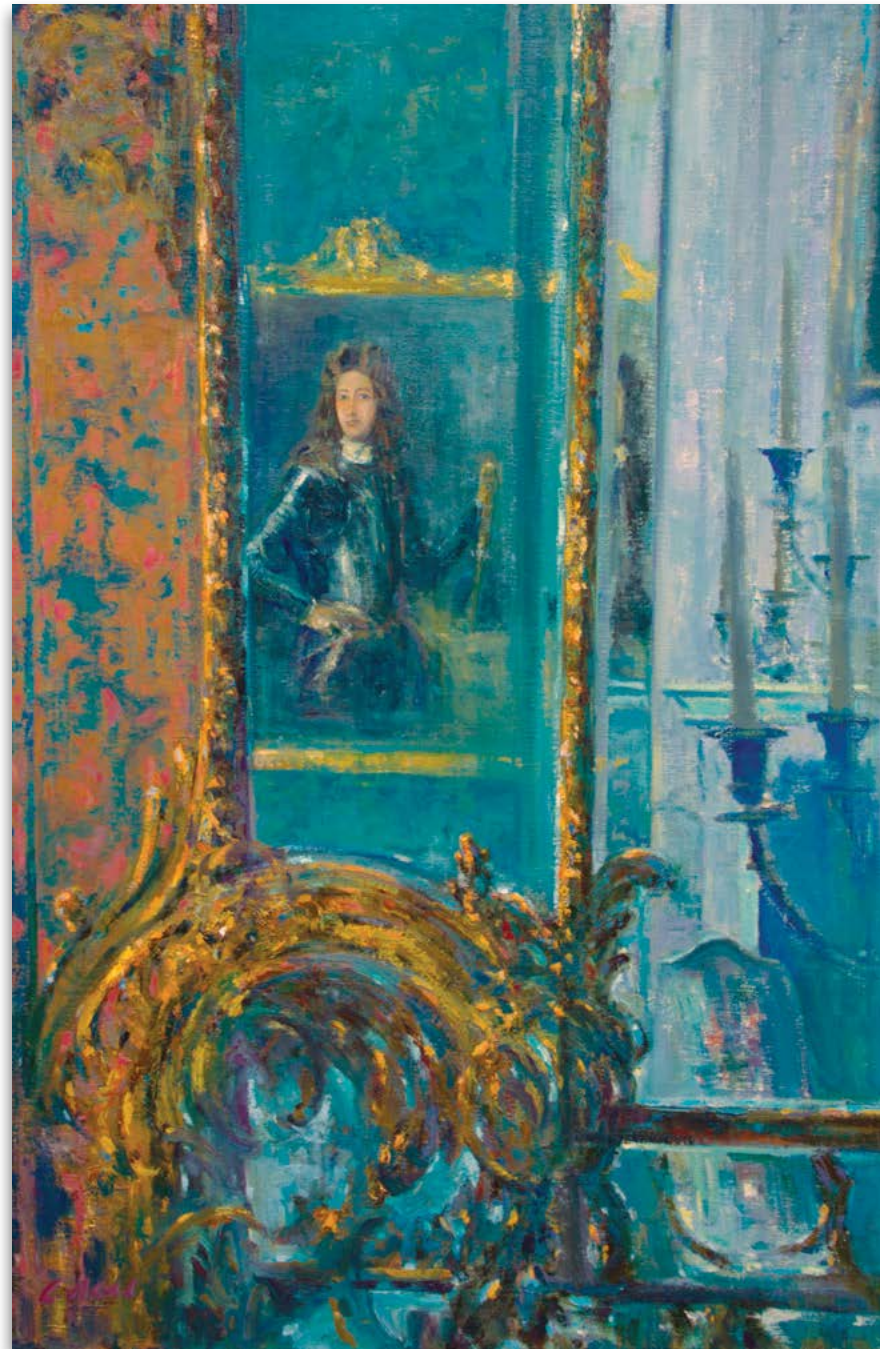
*Enactment in Time*

*Third State Room*

oil on canvas · 54 1/8 x 36 1/8 inches · FG© 136913







LEFT  
*The Assembly of Time,  
 Legacy*  
 oil on canvas  
 48 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 32 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches  
 FG© 136921

RIGHT  
*The Consequence of Action*  
 oil on canvas  
 48 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 54 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches  
 FG© 136909







# FINDLAY GALLERIES

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