Thesis Title:

Between the Interior and the Exterior:

Between the Finite and the Infinite

A space for the re-enchantment of art


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Graham Marchant, Sydney, 25th September 2012
I would like to acknowledge and thank my principal supervisor, Professor Anne Graham for her tireless support, astute guidance and continued encouragement throughout the program. I remain forever grateful to her.

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**Abstract**

I am an artist and a gardener; the observation of nature, of seasons and of changing light is my subject matter. In this paper I will look at the symbolic depiction of the garden and nature as subject from medieval times to the present day. I intend to make the case that realist depictions of nature, framed by the grid of architecture, have developed out of the same tradition as the abstract grid described by Krauss, as ‘…a model for the antidevelopmental, the antinarrative, the antihistorical’.

My definition of the grid is broader than that of Krauss, I include in the historic formal grid of the enclosed garden in Medieval times, the narrative grid of Friedrich’s doors and windows, the architectural grid of Haussmann’s Paris and Monet’s structural grid’s evident in his serial works. Through the inclusive nature of my approach I will follow a trajectory showing that the depiction of nature through the grids of landscape and garden design and through the domestic grids of windows, doors, balconies and greenhouses, a parallel realist, rather than an abstract, trajectory occurred.

In this paper I argue that the realist trajectory that I describe can also induce a sense of a transcendent reality that can articulate fundamental human emotions. The use of the grid structures in the work of the artists that I refer to provides a formwork for looking through, from inside to outside, from surface to space, from finite to infinite, a threshold which allowed for a new realization that ‘…dialectics of inside and outside multiply with countless diversified nuances.’ I am arguing that through realist depiction’s of nature we might find

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the ‘...experience of art as a form of enchantment that is useful in rendering a valuable way of knowing the world’ 3.
Between the Interior and the Exterior
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Introduction

Art is how human beings participate in the divine life at work in nature. Art is the visualization of the invisible inwardness of all things.4

Joseph Koerner describes an illuminating moment, when, while lecturing, he projected an image of Caspar David Friedrich’s *The Cross in the Mountains*. Koerner described this work as a paradigmatic instrument... (which portrayed

a) *disenchantment of the world.* Friedrich’s work created great debate, was this a sacred icon or a secular work of art? Koerner suggests that, ‘… this uncertainty reflects a distinctly modern condition: in the wake of the Reformation and Enlightenment…the private experience of art and nature replaces organized religion as a site of spiritual transcendence’.

What interests me is the fact that this disenchantment, which eventually resulted in a secularization of art, was replaced by a new order of geometry and balance. This was also exemplified by Friedrich, whose later work ‘... reflect [-ed] an absolute difference between inside and out, light and dark, body and soul… restore [-ing] an equilibrium between light and shadow, interior and out of doors, while also retaining the oil painting’s plot about entrapment and yearning for release.’ Friedrich replaced the grid of the cross and the altar with images of windows, thresholds and doorways. The landscape, which initially occurred behind the cross, was now viewed through a more domestic grid.

A more abstract grid, as discussed by Rosalind Krauss eventually succeeded this domestic grid: ‘Flattened, geometrized, and ordered. It is antinatural, antimimetic, antireal. It is what art looks like when it turns its back on nature. In the flatness that results from its coordinates, the grid is the means of crowding out the dimensions the dimensions of the real and replacing them with the lateral spread of a single surface.’

In this paper I argue that another trajectory also occurred in which the architectural grid of Koerner continued through the use of the grid of doorways, windows and thresholds in art. These structures provided a space for looking through, from inside to outside, a threshold or liminal space which

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6 Ibid., p.9.
allowed for a new realization that ‘...dialectics of inside and outside multiply with countless diversified nuances.’  

9 This is a magical space and in a sense I am arguing for the re-enchantment of art ‘...we might think of the experience of art as a form of enchantment that is useful in rendering a valuable way of knowing the world.’

10

I propose that this engagement with nature, this looking through, from inside to out, from dark to light, from body to soul retains the long held plot about entrapment and release...Koerner describes Friedrich’s subject as the hidden object of belief indicating that Friedrich attempted to ‘...create landscape painting as a new kind of religious icon, one resolutely in and of the secular world yet reaching beyond, transcendentally.’

12 This reaching beyond has a long history perhaps best described by Raphael (1483-1520) as ... ’ “a certain idea“ transcending experience.’

13

I propose to explore the work of artists, whose work, through the use of these architectural and formal structures, has exemplified this re-enchantment. I underpin this proposition with a brief history of the works and movements that provide the foundation for my works in this territory. The scope of the topic is vast, and rather than provide an overall chronology I have concentrated on issues, which coincide with, my interests and which are relevant to my studio work. As David Morgan states there is ‘...no comprehensive, seamlessly resolved, or normative model for how to think about art theory and religion.’

14 However I intend to trace a particular trajectory that I hope will offer some insight into the ideas and practicalities with which some artists have approached and developed this topic, in particular focussing on the subject of

9 Bachelard, G. The Poetics of Space, p.216.
11 Koerner, K, Caspar David Friedrich, p.297.
12 Ibid., p.300.
13 Prenderville, B, Realism in C20th Painting, Thames and Hudson, 2000, p.8.
14 Elkins & Morgan, Re-enchantment, p.19.
the garden and the liminal space between inside and out, between near and far, between surface and space, between the body and the spirit.

In Chapter One I examine images of medieval gardens that provide evidence of the geometry and genesis that form the historical precedent for my argument that an inherent spirituality has continued to embody certain art practices throughout time. It is important to examine these images of gardens and their meaning and structure in order understand this deep current that continues to inform so much contemporary practice.

In Chapter Two I describe the motivation and practice of the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood. They were inspired by Romanticism and chose subject matter with a morally uplifting often-religious theme. They were fascinated by medieval culture; they believed the paintings and artefacts of that period possessed a spiritual and creative integrity that had since been lost. They were greatly influenced by the colour and pattern used in medieval manuscripts and the symbolic portrayal of gardens. They sourced much of their own subject matter from gardens and their credo was truth to nature.15 I conclude this chapter by examining some of my own work in which medieval manuscripts appear.

In Chapter Three I move to the world of the French Impressionists who painted the ‘... warm weather seasons when nature and humankind are lured into a close unity of spirit and activity.’ 16 The spiritual imperative has changed here, the religious narratives that drove the Pre-Raphaelites has been replaced by a much more abstract sensation of the garden. I would argue that the works of the Impressionists, in their attempts to present the unpresentable, through the use of colour and light, are in the realm of the aesthetic and therefore could be considered in Kant’s terms to be in the realm of the spirit.

In Chapter Four I examine the influence of Japanese art on Monet, and how Japanese art suggested ways that he could express a modern relationship to nature. Monet’s lifetime of intense observation, according to Spate17 had led ‘... to a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness between all forms of being, a vision of ‘truth itself’ or truth to nature’ as the Pre Raphaelites would have said. In Chapter Five I briefly look at the influence of Boudin on Monet before going on to consider the role of his serial works. Monet often created series of related works, revisiting the same motif under different conditions of light and atmosphere. I too find that it is possible to make new discoveries by repeatedly visiting a similar subject matter. I have also found that by placing these serial works in a grid the interaction between the works creates a new harmony; the smaller works form a coherent whole. Chapter Six is devoted to my serial works where the influence of Monet is evident in my exploration of changing light and atmosphere.

In Chapter Seven I describe the changing world of the Impressionists and the impact of Haussmann on the boulevards and parks of Paris. The Impressionists ‘... wanted to render the visible world as they experienced it subjectively: unstable, evanescent and elusive.’ 18 In Chapter Eight I move from the city scape of Haussmann’s revitalised city, to the more domestic developments in housing and the development of balconies, terraces and verandas, these intermediate spaces between the interior and exterior originated from the courtyard which itself evolved from the enclosed garden.

In Chapter Eight I discuss, perhaps the most influential factor of all, the sudden proliferation of windows, for Mallarme 19 ‘... the window functioned as

this complex polysemic sign by which he could project the "crystallization of reality into art".

In Chapter Nine I move from the house to the garden where:

The natural was always so interwoven with human life that ...the painting ended up as the depiction of recurring seasonal events, some religious and some not. The starting-point for events was the special connection between the unfolding seasons and the unfolding of human life.20

In Chapter Ten I look at the garden paintings of Lucien Freud who maintained a strong interest in trying to put down squarely what one sees21. Lucien Freud has been inspirational to my practice as his principal mode of recording images involves intense observation. His paintings like those of Tim Maguire, who I look at in Chapter Eleven, are initially beautiful but there is a sense of transience, an undercurrent of time passing, mortality is evident in Freud’s depiction of flesh and of vegetation as it is in Maguire’s overblown flowers. I conclude Chapter Eleven with my own series of flower paintings in which I have consistently employed the symbol of the poppy that is symbolic of the world of dreams and death.

‘Art is how human beings participate in the divine life at work in nature.’22

All of the artists who I will discuss in this paper have described an affinity with the rhythms of nature, the ebb and flow of the natural world from day to night from light to dark, consistently captured light in their work as metaphor for some kind of transcendence. I describe the influence of these artists on my work and most importantly I attempt to make a case for a particular kind of re-enchantment that can be found in the portrayal of gardens, plants and flowers.

22 Morgan, D. Enchantment, p.33.
Chapter One

Hortus - Conclusus: The Enclosed Garden

A Garden enclosed is my sister my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.23
Art bears the sacred and keeps it for the ages. 24

Early images of medieval gardens provide evidence of the geometry and genesis that form the historical precedent for my argument that an inherent spirituality has continued to embody certain art practices throughout time. It is important to examine these gardens, their meaning and structure in order to understand this deep current that continues to inform so much contemporary practice.

In these early paintings and illuminated manuscripts the enclosed garden was represented as a place where the inhabitants were generally devoted to spiritual matters. At a later stage images of pleasure and recreation were included, and those gardens are referred to as the Hortus deliciarum, these were enclosed gardens that resembled the Garden of Eden, and were intended to represent an image of paradise on earth. The formal organisation of these enclosed gardens reflected the order of places of worship, often with a central trajectory leading to a place of meditation, protected from the exterior by surrounding walls.

23 Holy Bible, ‘Songs of Solomon’(also called ‘Song of Songs’), 4:12.
24 Morgan, D. Enchantment, p.16.
Depictions of these gardens manifest the significance in medieval culture of religious symbolism, referring specifically to the concept of the perpetual virginity of Mary and to the Immaculate Conception. Metaphorically the enclosed garden represents the virgin’s pure state and the high garden walls are there to protect her from the contagion of sin. The garden setting was designed and organised to provide an idealised location and conduit to deliver and reinforce biblical fables and spiritual messages.

Those responsible (usually the monastic orders) for the design and layout of the gardens were influenced by the gardens and writings from the east, in particular, Islam. The Islamic aim was to create an image of paradise on earth that emulated the garden described in the Koran, which was a ‘... splendid garden whose equal could not be created on earth’\textsuperscript{25}. There was a further corresponding connection between Islam and the medieval garden whereby all the elements had to conform to a specific code of symbolism that could be clearly and readily understood and interpreted. As Virginia Tuttle Clayton says,

Representations of gardens in medieval art were typically symbolic—not living, growing gardens but abstract ideas reflecting the Middle Ages heightened concern for the spiritual rather than the natural world. They depicted gardens because the medieval imagination habitually associated certain devotional images, and their profane counterparts, with garden settings.\textsuperscript{26}

Throughout the Medieval Period the unquestionable belief was that God created man in the Garden of Eden, a paradise. Adam and Eve represented innocence and purity but sadly they fell from grace through the act of original sin and were ejected from the garden. The Garden of Eden came to represent a lost paradise and consequently the vast majority of the paintings and manuscripts dealing with fundamentally religious subject matter use the garden as the setting.

\textsuperscript{25} Impelluso, L, \textit{Gardens in Art}, J Paul Getty Museum: Los Angeles, 2007, p.18
The concept of the *Hortus conclusus* goes back to the 8th century. *Hortus conclusus* is derived from the Latin meaning literally enclosed garden 27 and according to Abden and de Wit the tradition of the walled garden goes back at least three thousand years: ‘The inhabitants of Egypt, Babylon, Mesopotamia and Persia constructed walled places containing fruit trees, pools and places to sit. The Medieval Enclosed garden took over these traditions and transformed them, translating the Oriental archetypes into the European context ‘ 28.

The medieval enclosed garden started to appear in Europe around c.800 and continued until c.1500, when they were superseded by the gardens of the Renaissance that started to dominate garden design.29 There are no existing examples of gardens created during the period c.800-c.1500 so for any evidence we have to look at the works of art produced during that period. Up until the C13th the vast majority of the artefacts depicting the enclosed garden were produced by the monastic orders and took the form of illuminated manuscripts, usually combining image and text.

There are examples of isolated paintings and from the C14th with the development of the printing press, engravings started to appear. There are a few examples of illustrated scientific papers and encyclopaedias,30 but they are rare, and by far the vast majority of the images were illuminated manuscripts created for religious purposes.

The monastic orders produced these manuscripts largely for their own use as prayer books, (with the more elaborate examples being placed at the altar) and for monastic study. Outside of the monasteries only the very wealthy could afford to commission them, using them as personal prayer books. The manuscripts were very elaborate and time consuming to produce and without

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artificial light the opportunity to work on them was limited. There was little desire or tradition to depict any specific identifiable gardens as they were largely metaphorical religious texts for spiritual purposes. The reason, as Clayton says: ‘Rather than present the appearance of specific existing gardens they provide us with a conceptual garden whose motifs portray such sacred precincts as the Garden of Eden, and Heavenly Paradise.’

![Fig 2, Master of the Maréchal de Brose, c.1475, Monastery Garden, Bibliothéque Arsenal, Paris.](image)

During the medieval period the monastic gardens were devoted to the needs of their community, the kitchen garden supplied fruit and vegetables and the herbaria provided herbs for both medicinal purposes and for their mythical and allegorical meanings. Flowers were grown in abundance to decorate the altar and because of their symbolic association with the Virgin Mary.

The monasteries became the repositories of botanic and agricultural knowledge. This tradition of horticultural scholarship evolved ‘... in an alternate more learned direction that eventually led to the birth of the botanical garden’.

31 Ibid., p.15.
32 Ibid., p. 21.
33 Impelluso, L, Gardens in Art, p.127.
Besides the garden providing necessities, it continued to provide contact with the soil, reinforcing the monk’s deep feeling for nature, and maintaining their traditional image of paradise that replenished their aspirations to create the lost promised land of Eden.34 This encouraged the notion that the garden could extend beyond the solely practical and was seen as a place for spiritual and personal reflection. The very essence of what a Garden means to us now was embraced then, as Abden and de Wit describe: ‘…regulations placed work and contemplation on equal footing setting the garden free. Elevated above its role as production unit, it was now a permissible source of pleasure ’ 35.

Fig 3, Scene in a Garden From Le Romaunt de la Rose c.1485

4 Ibid., p. 126.
Pleasure in this context included attending to the profound religious and symbolic needs of medieval man, (fig 3) consequently, ‘... the garden ends up becoming a place in which one may find answers to the great existential questions and establish a relationship between oneself, nature and god’ 36.

Images show that the enclosed garden besides being a place that provides for the spiritual, medicinal and sustenance, also, ‘... provides insights into the medieval dream of perfect horticultural bliss, gorgeous enclaves resplendent beyond, anything in our earthly experience’ 37.

The enclosed gardens were inward looking and always surrounded by high walls, the wall isolates the garden, indicating it as a place of retreat that provides refuge and where an individual is free to live in accordance with God’s original plan. Besides their physical function the walls had a spiritual significance that recalled the enclosure of Earthly Paradise in the Garden of Eden from which Adam and Eve were banished, (fig 4). The Virgin Mary herself was seen as: ‘The intermediary between man and God, and was often represented by the image of an enclosed garden, the wall itself came to signify purity and the freedom from sin’ 38.

The images have a rigid geometry usually square or rectangular and the central cloister, the location for religious meditation and prayer, divided into four by paths that form a cross at their intersection. The number four was central to the mediaeval garden (a legacy from Islamic gardens) because it evoked spiritual meanings, ‘... the four rivers of Paradise, the four cardinal virtues, and the four evangelists’ 39.

38 Ibid.
39 Ibid., p.21.
The elements conform to reinforce its geometry and the central feature at the intersection of the paths was usually a fountain or fishpond, which symbolised many things, the necessity of water for growth, and a symbol of the font from which the rivers of Paradise spring. Occurring at the intersection of the paths it represented the \textit{umbilicus mundi} (navel of the world, font of life gift from God). \footnote{Ibid.}

The lawn was significant in monastic gardens as it was known as the Cloister Garth where the monks held regular religious processions and undertook their studies. The lawn was always kept short and well watered as the colour green was important to the monks, as they understood green to be a metaphysical symbol for re-birth and everlasting life, and ‘... the green turf refreshed uncloistered eyes and their desire to study returns’ \footnote{Landsberg,S, \textit{The Medieval Garden}, p.4.}.
The feature of flowers growing in the lawns and on grass seats (known as the flowery mead) occurred because they sourced their turf from the surrounding meadows and the flowers were simply transplanted, symbolising the harnessing of nature. Internally there were raised planting beds that subdivided the area into a rectilinear pattern and raised areas planted with grass became turf seats for reading and meditating. *Treillage* was very popular and used to form ornamental screens to fence off and divide the garden into sections. These screens supported climbing plants, especially the ubiquitous roses, and trees and vines were trained to provide shady galleries, walkways and arbours.

**The Secular Garden**

Towards the end of the 13th century the feuding amongst the aristocracy had started to wane, and commerce and trade were taking place once more. Free fortified cities were being built and an interest in garden art was rekindled.\(^{42}\) The insular thinking (other than anything spiritual and heaven bound) of the monastic order started to be influenced by issues other than the purely religious. The inspiration came from Europe and the East, brought by tales of merchants and crusaders. There were descriptions of ‘... beautiful paradise gardens common in Muslim lands and tales of romance set in courtly gardens surrounded by the loveliness of flowering fruit trees, rose and singing birds’\(^{43}\). A seminal work written at this time in the C13th underlying the philosophy of the garden were the two books, *Le Roman de la Rose*, the first by Guillaume de Lorris written around 1230 and the second (a continuation of the first) some forty years later by Jean de Meun (1250-1305).

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\(^{43}\) Ibid., p.143.
Le Roman de la Rose is an allegory about the art of loving (fig 5) where the beloved is manifested as a rose. Complicated and convoluted the book generated many artistic representations of a garden of love taking the enclosed garden beyond the monastic to the secular. The secular garden provides us with many of the attributes familiar to the enclosed garden but mingled within the religious motifs are themes of courtly love. Love as an emotion was only really identified and discussed philosophically during the latter part of the middle ages.

The Illuminated Manuscript:

The manuscripts were sheets of vellum written in highly embellished text and decorated. The word illuminated originates from the Latin illuminaire, which means to adorn, (to add the beauty or glory to something). John Ruskin (1819-1900) the most famous English critic of his day in describing these manuscripts states that: ‘...illumination is only writing made beautiful the moment illumination passes into picture making it has lost its dignity and

function’.45 but as John Harthan confirms: ‘It is not the writing, alone which is made beautiful, but rather the whole page, in which writing is but one component.’ 46 The illuminated manuscript was an early example of a collaborative artwork, with the letters written by the scribe, (calligrapher) and the pictures and borders painted by the artist (fig 6).

My own interest in manuscripts was initially stimulated by the elegance of their calligraphy, having studied lettering as a subject in my formative years at art school. I also enjoy the exquisite balance between image and text; these illuminated texts are loaded with symbolism and I often incorporate an image of an illuminated manuscript into my paintings to add complexity and to further layer the possible interpretations of framing, space and time. I discuss this in more detail in Chapter Two.

I have a collection of reproductions of illuminated manuscripts pinned to my studio wall (fig 7) and when arranging a still life or dealing with the subject of interior or exterior the manuscript images are evident. They provide the opportunity to introduce intense detail and I often juxtapose sections of manuscripts against patterned wallpaper and fabric. By including them in the image they provide me with the opportunity to introduce lettering that is more about decoration and surface than prayer. In one sense they perform the function of the grid in that they hold perception on the surface of the painting, whilst allowing the viewer to look through; not dissimilar to the way that grids: ‘... map the surface of the painting itself... the physical qualities of the surface, we could say, are mapped onto the aesthetic dimensions of the same surface’47.

However I depart from Krauss and place my works in the territory of Freidrich and nature, Koerner eloquently describes the pattern and order of nature in Friedrich’s depiction of the branches of trees (Fig 8). The grove’s episodes of asymmetry and randomness, its excursions into the accidental and particular, function merely to place the picture’s order within the natural world. They assure you that the geometry you see does not belong to the canvas alone, but is coextensive with the grove itself, which seems to have grown precisely to accommodate and frame your gaze.48

47 Krauss, R. The Originality of the Avant-Garde, p.10.
48 Koerner, J. Caspar David Friedrich,p.296.
In the medieval images illustrated in this paper, apart from the text based works, we have the quintessential notion of the garden as a protected private
space sometimes pious sometimes indulgent but always suggesting itself as a space in which our symbolic, dietary, medicinal and educational needs can be catered.

The paintings describe the garden as a sanctuary from the trials and tribulations of the day-to-day world. For the best part of seven hundred years in both the enclosed garden and the ‘garden of delight’ medieval man’s spiritual and pleasurable needs were metaphorically attended to. Every aspect of the garden and in particular the divided enclosures and the high walls all contributed to their fundamental belief in God. To quote Abden and de Wit: ‘In the enclosed world of the *hortus conclusus* the only expansive element is the sky and the sky’s endlessness, which is the vertical link with the zenith. The suggestion alone was enough to inspire medieval man with awe for the boundless magnitude of God.’

However after several centuries and with the gradual emergence of more peaceful times there surfaced the need to escape the limitations of the enclosed garden ‘... and [to] connect it with the world at large.’ Islamic examples had shown that it was not a case of replacing one with other; the medieval enclosure and the emerging desire for the horizon had to be absorbed into one concept. So, ‘what happens when the introverted garden engages with the world outside, the landscape?’ Breaking down the wall literally entangled the garden with the landscape; the introduction of the expanded visible landscape amplified the very essence of the enclosure. As the Renaissance tradition emerged, the physical walls of the enclosed garden were replaced with thickets and groves of trees; areas were

50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
delineated with carefully pruned hedgerows forming what were known as ‘... green rooms, sometimes these enclosures had a particular function or theme as if they were an outward extension of the rooms or halls of the palace’. The outside wall was no longer a barrier to nature and the landscape, they started to co exist, a coexistence that gave birth to the concept of the landscape gardening. Ironically this dissolving of the wall itself became symbolic; ‘... the absence of enclosures in landscape parks has been interpreted as a rejection of imposed constraints and restrictions’.53

I do not entirely agree with this construct and suggest that the hedges, mazes and constructed viewpoints, so favoured by Renaissance landscape designers, absolutely echo the glimpses of another place as seen in the images of the Medieval Garden. This idea of a glimpse of another reality, is continued by artists such as Velazquez and Vermeer who:

…engendered illusionism of a complex and paradox kind. The portrayal by these painters and others of mirrors and frames, used as devices to intensify illusion, also disclosed the workings of illusionism itself and made the act of viewing self-conscious… the complicity between painting and the viewer thus came to reach a new pitch of development. 54

I return to a discussion in relation to the use of mirrors, windows and kinds of framing in later chapters but in the following chapter intend to focus on a very direct line of descent from the world of the Medieval Manuscript which leads to the highly ordered decorative world of the Pre-Raphaelites. The Pre-Raphaelites have provided a source of inspiration for my own work and I discuss this in more detail in Chapter Two.

52 Ibid., Impelluso L, Gardens in Art, p.124.  
53 Ibid.  
54 Prenderville, B. Realism in C20th Painting, p. 8.
The Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood was formed in the house of the artist John Everett Millais (1829-1910) then a student at the Royal Academy in London. They were inspired by Romanticism and chose subject matter with a morally uplifting often-religious theme. They were fascinated by medieval culture; they believed the paintings and artefacts of that period possessed a spiritual and creative integrity that had since been lost. They were influenced by both the technical procedures adopted both by the Flemish and Italian painters who preceded Raphael (1483-1520) and by the production of the medieval manuscripts. Compared to the typically dark and blended paintings of the Victorian era, they favoured a revival of the brightly coloured flat painted areas typical of the C14th and C15th.

The Pre-Raphaelites stressed the credo of truth to nature 55 and prior to the French Impressionists were the first cited artists to start and complete a work outdoors on location. In their obsession to maintain a truth to nature they abandoned preparatory sketches and as early as 1848, Holman Hunt communicated to Millais that he wanted to ‘... paint the whole out of doors, direct on the canvas itself, with every detail I can see, and with the sunlight brightness of the day itself ’56.

It is worth commenting here that unlike the French Impressionists who often completed the painting in one sitting (or with only minor adjustments back in the studio) there are instances where the Pre Raphaelites claim to have worked on a painting for as long as four months. During 1851 Millais painted Ophelia (fig 9) and is said to have spent up to eleven hours a day during July.

56 Ibid., p.17.
to October ‘...sitting on the banks of the Hogsmill river, under an umbrella painting the scene in painstaking detail’ 57.

Fig 9. John Everett Millais, *Ophelia*, 1851-52, Oil on canvas, 76 x 111cm, Tate Gallery, London.

As well as adopting the painstaking methods they associated with the quattrocento they reinforced their connection to medieval times by their choice of religious, literary and moral subject matter. Somewhat ridiculed by the art community initially they were publicly defended by John Ruskin in 1851, and continued to attract some followers. However the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was a relatively short-lived movement, its aims somehow clouded between their aspirations for a romantic medieval revival and their overt adherence to realism. By 1853 the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood had virtually dissolved with its most significant follower William Morris (1843-96) leaving them to establish the Arts and Crafts Movement. This retained the Pre-Raphaelite influence of the Gothic revival but rather than highlighting the moral and religious high ground, they emphasised the idealised peasantry and medieval community portrayed throughout the C14-15th.

When examining *Convent Thoughts* (Fig 10) by Charles Allston Collins (1828-

57 Ibid., p.135.
1873) in comparison to *Emilia in her Garden* (fig 11), the connections between the Pre-Raphaelite’s and images of the enclosed garden painted in the C14-15th become very apparent. Although Charles Collins was not a member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood he painted with their ideals very much in his heart and Rossetti wrote in the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood Journal in 1851 that his work was ‘very charming indeed--- (and it had) a strong claim to Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood brotherhood.’

When comparing *Convent Thoughts* with *Emilia in her Garden* painted in the C15th, one sees how Collins appropriated aspects of *Emilia in her Garden* in his work, both show a single female figure in a contemplative mood, Collins depicts a nun, quietly enjoying the pure white flowers in a walled garden. In earlier *Emilia in her Garden* (fig 11) we see a similarly young and beautiful woman, again in a protected walled space; this painting, however, shows three rather evil looking spectators peeping in.

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58 Ibid., p.105.
They seem to represent all the evils beyond the wall whereas in Collin’s work the medieval devil has been expelled allowing nature to rule.

This is demonstrated by the nun appearing to discard the religious text in her hand and instead contemplates the beauty of nature. Everything (including its title) demonstrates some sort of religious symbolism, including the habit and the illuminated bible. Both images contain architectural and botanic features associated with medieval manuscripts; the high wall, the ordered manicured plants, the symbolic flowers, and the virginal woman. The flowers are very significant not only for their religious connection but also as a symbol of the secular topic of unrequited and difficult romance.

The following two suppositions provide an indication as to why the inclusion
of flowers could function as such potent metaphors. Lucia Impelluso suggests that Emilia (fig 11) is totally engrossed in ‘... weaving her crown of flowers, a typical courtly activity for woman and usually a token of love for a beloved man or woman, or for the Virgin Mary’. A further suggestion about the flowers comes from Catherine Donzel, that Medieval manuscripts reveal a predilection for two colour arrangements as seen in the wreath in ‘... the alternation of red and white flowers represents entwined symbols of her chastity and her passion for the man she loves’.

As well as representing a symbolic association, flowers continued to be used for medicinal purposes. In the foreground of Convent Thoughts we see lavender, columbine, rosemary and, the taller plant in the front, wild mauve. All of these plants were ‘...part of the medieval pharmacopoeia, being used in a four- flower tisane. ’ (an infusion of leaves or flowers) and these medicinal herbs form yet another connection with the body to nature.

The intense attention to detail apparent in the Pre-Raphaelite paintings, has influenced my work. They sought to achieve detail as a consequence of their overriding desire to be true to nature. This attention to detail was contrary to the fashion in C19th painting where a focal point was emphasised by underplaying subordinate areas of the image whereas the Pre-Raphaelites gave equal attention to the entire surface of painting. They achieved this by the use of small brush strokes to maintain a heightened degree of focus throughout; everything was addressed with the same degree of clarity and sharpness. The precision attained by this method resulted in the image being highly charged with information, something that I strive for in my work.

59 Impelluso, I, Gardens in Art, p.25.
61 Ibid.
This attention to detail was not arrived at easily and when observing Collins as he painted *Convent Thoughts*, Millais was quoted ‘...he works very slowly and I know that a flower of one of the lilies occupied a whole day’ 62.

The detail (fig 12) demonstrates Collin’s capacity to record every detail, and an over-all focus is very evident here. The depiction of the cloth sleeve shows the weave of the cloth whilst the complicated depiction of the holding of the manuscript (fig 13) commands three different view points, it would have required an extraordinary level of skill to describe the receding image and text.

As with many Pre-Raphaelite paintings there is a very skilful picture making process at work that deals with very sophisticated pictorial elements, similar to the elements evident in the C14th examples that provided their inspiration. This emphasis on medieval culture was to clash with certain principles of realism, which stress the independent observation of nature. In its early

stages, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood believed that their two interests were consistent with one another, but in later years the movement divided and began to move in two directions.

These differing directions were lead on the realist-side by Holman-Hunt (1827-1910 and Millais, while the medievalist-side was led by Dante-Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82) and his followers, Edward Burne-Jones (1833-98) and William Morris (1834-1896). This split was never absolute, since both factions believed that art was essentially spiritual in character, opposing their idealism to the materialist realism associated with Gustave Courbet (1819-77) and Impressionism. William Morris became the motivational leader of what became known as The Arts and Crafts Movement.

His inspiration … was both nature and the medieval world. He wanted to find a way out of industrial ugliness, back to the joys of creation experienced in the ‘Golden Age’ of English history when Elizabeth 1 was on the throne. It was perceived, romantically, as being a much simpler time when life was lived at a pace that was manageable. 63

63 McDowell, C, Arts & Crafts Movement – William Morris the Art that is Life, accessed 28-8 2012
Morris took the romantic perfectionism of the Pre Raphaelites and their love of nature and combined it with exquisite craftsmanship. I empathise with this emphasis on craftsmanship, so evident in Medieval Manuscripts, Pre-Raphaelite Painting and in the Arts and Crafts Movement. John Dewey at a later stage discusses craftsmanship and its relation to the spiritual:

Craftsmanship to be artistic in the final sense must be “loving”; it must deeply care for the subject matter upon which skill is exercised…constant observation is, of course, necessary for the maker while he is producing…the process of art in production is related to the esthetic in perception organically - as the Lord God in creation surveyed his work and found it good.64

In The Manuscript series I describe my own craft in detail, I agree with Dewey, and take the argument for craftsmanship and the importance of materials further by considering Elkins comparison of art to alchemy. Elkins describes the mixing of paint and the act of painting not so much as spiritual but as alchecal:

…oily mud is the medium of painters…so painting ...(is) one example of negotiations between water and stone, and the other is alchemy…(alchemy) is the most developed language for thinking in substances and processes. For a spiritual alchemist, whatever happens in the furnace is an allegory of what takes place in the alchemist’s mind or soul. 65

Here we have a clear exposition of mind and soul as the same, which are a tenet that runs through Dewey’s argument and a tenet that I wish to explore further.

The Manuscript Series:
Chinese Silk and Manuscripts

In the following section I describe one of my works *Chinese Silk and Manuscripts*, (fig 14) in some detail, I will also add some comments on works related to the production of *Chinese Silks and Manuscripts*. Other works which are similar in scope and content and formed the basis of my exhibition will be discussed and illustrated later in the thesis. I have chosen this work as it best exemplifies the influences of the works and techniques discussed in the previous sections. ‘He was painting in oils with watercolour brushes, as thinly as in watercolour, on canvas, which he primed with white till, the surface was smooth as cardboard and every tint remained transparent’.

Fig 14, Graham Marchant, 2007, *Chinese Silk and Manuscripts*, Oil on Canvas, 80x110 cm, Collection: The Artist.

The quote above refers to a description of the Pre-Raphaelite artist Dante

Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82) by his friend the painter and poet artist William Scott (1811-90). This quote encapsulates the Pre-Raphaelite’s technique and methodology, however in Chinese Silk and Manuscripts (fig 14) other factors emerge in the discussion.

Clearly my work engages with the genre of still life engaging with, as Norman Bryson would describe it, rhopography. I use his words to define this term: ‘Rhopography (from rhopos, trivial objects, small wares, trifles) is the depiction of those things that lack importance, ’ the unassuming material base of life that “importance” overlooks…still life takes on the exploration of what “importance” tramples underfoot ‘ 67.

Bryson understands that still life:

…Attends to the world ignored by the human impulse to create greatness. Its assault on the prestige of the human subject is therefore conducted at a very deep level. The human figure with all its fascination is expelled…still life is unimpressed by the categories of achievement, grandeur or the unique.68

I accord with Bryson’s definition and I avoid the use of the human subject, this obviously makes a profound differentiation between my work and that of my medieval and Pre-Raphaelite precursors. However as with all still life there is a sense of human presence of objects placed, arranged, awaiting viewing. Again, to quote Bryson:

…The culture of the table displays a rapid volatile receptivity to the surrounding culture in the mode of inflecting its cultural forms. At the same time it also displays a high level of resistance to innovation in the forms themselves… tankards, deep dishes, …stemmed glasses…once these things were in general use, they generally remained.69

68 Ibid.
69 Ibid., p.13
I make use of these domestic items to describe the artefacts with which we surround ourselves but my intention is to do more than this. In *Chinese Silk and Manuscripts* the objects chosen are as meaningful as the manner in which they are painted and their placement is also crucial to an understanding of my intent. Perhaps I can explain this by looking at Pieter Aertsen’s *The Butcher’s Stall*, (fig 15).

![Fig 15, Pieter Aertson, The Butchers Stall, 1551, Oil on wooden panel, 123 x 150 cm, University of Uppsala, Sweden.](image)

Aertson’s painting initially can be read as a Rabelaisian fantasy, sausages, hams, lumps of fat seem to confirm this work as a work of rhopography; but this is not so, seen in the sliver of a background space is a sacred subject. *The Butchers Stall* is structured around the sacred and the profane depicting the *Flight into Egypt* with Mary giving alms to a beggar in the far background. In the foreground the butcher carries on the daily business of survival.

I am also interested in the juxtaposition of opposites evident in Aertson’s work, the cluttered, detailed foreground with a sliver of space representing escape. In
Chinese Silk and Manuscripts the foreground adopts the style of the *vanitas*, exotic fabrics and ceramics are combined with illustrated manuscripts to provide a luxuriant celebration of objects, ‘Objects in the image are related to each other through rhythms arising within the four sides of the frame …harmonies of tone; colour and composition build an order internal to the work’ 70.

However I have provided a visual escape from these riches, there is a slender rectangle of green behind the abundance, an aperture into a different space.

Based on a large-scale drawing (fig 16), I edited and reassembled certain sections of the drawing, repositioning the manuscripts and modifying the garden view through the window reducing it to a small slither. I reduced the garden view in order to amplify the sharp focus of the pattern and detail in the material and the plate in the foreground. The small slip of garden was the one area painted out of focus and with minimum detail, in order to provide a contrast to the busy interior and to suggest a sense of space and peace beyond the interior and still life group. The almost abstract rectangle of the garden also amplifies the shallow space of the foreground arrangement, and the sudden change in colour and tone, aims to accentuate the difference between the interior and exterior.

The curtain to the extreme left counters the perspective of the patterned wallpaper and creates an area of pattern that provides a foreground framing the interior sections of the work. Drawing and painting patterned material allows me the opportunity to explore various glazing techniques both in oil paint and in watercolour. The patterned areas are first painted as if they were flat and then once dry are glazed with toned veils of transparent paint to create the illusion of folds, depth and to record the behaviour of light.

70 Ibid., p.114
Prior to discussing this work it seems important to consider the function and place of drawing. For me it is both an end in itself and a means of experimenting with form, playing with space, and exploring possible conjunctions of the two. Drawing has been described eloquently by the poet Seamus Heaney as an art form that occupies, ‘... a placeless heaven freed from the literal’ 71.

I also respond to the artist Antony Gormley’s (b.1950) writing about his approach to drawing:

‘What is drawing for me? It’s a kind of magic, a kind of necessity. Drawing is an attempt to fix the world, not as it is, but as it exists inside me. So the drawings are mental diagrams. You can condense things in a space that is infinite… Drawing is not so much a mirror, or a window, as a lens which can be looked at in either direction, either back towards the retina of the mind, or forward towards space. You could perhaps not look so much at drawing as through it’ 72.

Janet McKenzie-Spens in discussing this describes Gormley’s drawings as, ‘offering the most immediate form of meditative responses to place, an intuitive exploration to one’s relationship with the wider world, creating a poetic and divers range of images’ 73.

73 Mckenzie-Spens, J, in ‘Studio Visits No 2’ Antony Gormley www.studiointernational.co.uk, published 07/12/11 sourced 6/9/1
In the drawing *Quilts, Silks, Manuscripts and Willow Patterned Plate*, (fig 16) the willow-patterned plate also appears in *Chinese Silk and Manuscripts*. I often incorporate the same objects in a range of works, as these objects that continue to hold my interest and provide inspiration. This connection to particular items is common to many painters: Van Gogh (1853-90):

... continued to paint still life with a strong symbolic value...(these works) would culminate in the famous portraits of his chair and that of Gauguin (1848-1903) with their respective personal effects, painted during their short lived artistic partnership at Arles in 1888. Thirteen years later, twelve after the death of his friend van Gogh...Gauguin painted ‘Sunflowers on a Chair’ in the choice of flowers, cultivated in his own garden with seeds that he had ordered from France, and in their arrangement on the chair, the painting represents a kind of mournful souvenir of his brusquely interrupted friendship with van Gogh, whose paintings of sunflowers he
had always admired.

For Gauguin the chair was a symbol of friendship and also a *memento mori*. For me the willow patterned plate represents a connection with the Orientalism so evident in Europe in the late 1800s in Paris and so visible in the paintings of Claude Monet (1840-1926), providing the opportunity to place one landscape inside another.

The curtains make reference to the patterns of William Morris taken from nature, and of course the Illustrated Manuscript refers even further back to the use of elaborate, stylised lettering inspired by natural forms. This complex use of patterning incorporates many stories and histories, a cornucopia; the view through the window represents a more meditative tranquil possibility, a counterpoint to the swirling pattern of the foreground. The glimpsed garden, as seen through the window, functions as a balance for the decorative pattern of the material and manuscripts.

*William Morris Silk and Illuminated Manuscript*,

With William Morris *Silk and Illuminated Manuscripts* (fig 17) there are fewer elements taken from the original drawing and I incorporated certain elements used in *Chinese Silks and Manuscript* (fig 14). I changed the position of the manuscripts and juxtaposed them against the contrasting patterned material. This was to establish a contrast between the ordered calligraphy of the manuscript and the random pattern of the curtain.

The willow-patterned plate re-appears and the gingham material was enlarged and reconfigured. The gingham material is another recurring item in many of my paintings and prints, because of its energetic pattern and bold design I use it to enliven certain passages in the paintings.

I acknowledge the repeated use of the gingham pattern in the work Pierre Bonnard (1867-1947) who used it repeatedly in his paintings, ‘...and the employment of the vibrant energy of gingham cloth became one of Bonnard’s signature themes.’ 75 It was this vibrant energy and the strong graphic quality of the gingham material that influenced my choice. I coupled its strong geometry in direct contrast to the organic nature of the flowers and the curtain material.

Fig 17, Graham Marchant, 2007, *William Morris Silk and Illuminated Manuscript*, Watercolour 56 x76cm, Collection: The Artist.

The curtain material was sourced from a textile design by William Morris, who, as stated previously, was closely associated with the Pre-Raphaelites but who was much more concerned with interpreting their ideals through functional design, which included fabric, wall papers, typography, and gardens. His premise, with his fabrics and wallpapers, was to bring the essence of the garden into the house. Through numerous studies he transformed flora from the garden into his designs. Wendy Hitchmouch, when referring to the years he lived at The Red House, describes this process: ‘William Morris’s notebooks from the Red House years are peppered with studies of simple flowers and foliage that must surely have been taken from the garden and the plants that he had chosen for his garden began to appear in his designs for wallpapers and fabrics ’76.

The wrought iron balcony establishes a neutral zone attached to the house but outside. The regular geometry of the ironwork relates to the geometry in the manuscripts and imposes an order through which we see the more organic flow and rhythmic order of the vegetation.

*Orchid, manuscripts and willow pattern plate, 2007: Orchid and Manuscripts, 2008.*

![Image](image)

Fig 18, Graham Marchant, *Orchid, Manuscripts and Willow Pattern Plate*, 2007, Graphite on paper, 76 x 56 cm, Collection: the Artist.

This drawing (fig 18) was the basis for the following two works, one a watercolour and one a multiple plate colour etching, (figs 19 & 20). Both of these works had a more intense pattern included in order to maximise the overall surface activity, my intention was to create the illusion of receding space, moving from right to left in the surface of the mirror. The mirror performs a similar function to that of a window without providing the release of a calm exterior space; as the viewer is unable to leave the interior context.
The mirror acts as a portal isolating a specific area but never taking you out of the interior. The mirror introduces an angle direct angle, which is intended to direct the eye deeper into the image towards the manuscripts. The text in the reflected manuscripts refers to the text in the Collins, *Convent Thoughts*.

Fig 20, Graham Marchant, 2007-8, *Orchid & Manuscript*, multiple plate colour etching, 55x40cm.
The etching (fig 20) was made using multiple plates, five altogether printed in succession with the ink wet in wet. Eight colours were used on the five plates using the la poupé process. The patterned wallpaper is seen as a grid on the wall but the geometry recedes in the mirror reflection. The wallpaper grid provides a simple repetitive pattern which contrast with the complex design of the patterned material and the willow patterned plate. In this instance the meditative space is provided by the gentle repetition of the gridded wallpaper.

*Silks, Quilts and Manuscripts.*

![Image of Silks, Quilts and Manuscripts](image)

Fig 21, Graham Marchant, 2007-8, Silks, Quilts and Manuscripts, Oil on canvas, 120 x 147 cm, Collection; The Artist.

The studio arrangement for *Silks Quilts and Manuscripts* (fig 21) was another opportunity to revisit my familiar subject matter but on this occasion I wanted to consider the use of trompe-l’œil as yet another means of introducing a further layer of complexity that would add to the possible avenues for both escape and meaning within the overall structure of the work.
Trompe-l’-oeil resembles still life painting and shares with it a similar feeling of intimacy. The genre of tromp-l’-oeil is essentially decorative but becomes more intriguing because of its intention to deceive. It is, by its very nature, ambiguous and the paintings often display many of the strategies apparent in still life painting. I initially saw the work of Cornelius Norbertus-Gysbrechts (1659-78) in an exhibition ‘Painted Illusions’ in the National Gallery in London in 2000 and Silks Quilts and Manuscripts (fig 22) makes reference to this work, particularly aspects of the tromp l’oeil genre and to his letter rack pieces. The letter rack paintings characteristically contain all sorts of apparently random objects that may be of everyday use.

Fig 22, Cornelius Gijsbrechts, Trompe l’oeil of a letter rack with Christian V’s Proclamation, 1671, Oil on canvas 138.5 x 183cm, Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen.

Consequently these paintings were often called a quodlibet, Latin for ‘what you please’, i.e. ‘anything at all’ or ‘all sorts’. 77 In Silks Quilts and Manuscripts the use of random objects extended to adding a variety of paraphernalia from the studio. I imitated the letter rack device using a regular pattern of red tape to support the disorder of the manuscripts and objects.

The concept of the pulled back curtain which reveals the letter rack and pin board, has its origins in the Parrhasius curtain, referring to the competition between the ancient Greek painters Parrhasius and Zeuxis as told by the Roman author Pliny the Elder (23 AD – August 25, 79 AD). Zeuxis and Parrhasius were competing to decide who was the better painter. Zeuxis fooled a flock of birds with his painting of grapes, which they attempted to eat. Parrhasius responded by inviting Zeuxis to look at his painting by drawing aside the curtain, but when Zeuxis attempted to do so he realized that rather than being a curtain it was a painting of a curtain. The cleverness of this deceit is similar to that of *trompe-l’-oeil*, and my use of curtains, mirrors and the willow patterned plate has a similar intent in providing another possible portal to a different landscape.

The curtain as a motif, which conceals and reveals at the same time, can be seen as half covering the objects on the shelves in (fig 20). Shelves, cupboards, niches, grottos and caves have been used since antiquity. Perhaps most famously by Courbet, in a rather different but equivalent context, in *L’ Origine du Monde* (1866) the painting itself became a kind of niche. Initially the painting was draped with a curtain to cover the possibilities beneath and later another, interestingly symbolic painting, was placed over the work.

The wall cupboard, niche or enclosed shelves provide a structure to contain the objects, and a ready-made portal for viewing the contents. In (fig 23) the surround offers a ready made frame and establishes exactly where the picture plane is.

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In *Silks, Quilts and Manuscripts* (fig 21) the painted postcards attached to the face of the shelf perform the same function; establishing a picture plane that in this instance sits slightly back from the black cloth. The view of the garden through the window is muted in colour and contrasts the more intense colour and shallow space of the interior.

**Still life with Agnes Quilt**

I revisited the quilt in the watercolour *Still Life with Agnes Quilt*, (fig 24). The original oil painting allowed me to use a palette of the full spectrum and to explore the techniques of glazing and scumbling. William Wright described this procedure, in an exhibition catalogue essay and wrote, ‘(It is)…. a slow deliberative process involving continuous transformative action through successive stages of revision. … . the intersecting shapes are the result of repeated over-layering: intensifying modifying: glazing and scumbling until the desired point of embracing pictorial clarity is attained’ 79.

I followed a similar process with the watercolour, although in this case transparency and brilliance were combined with extensive over-layering to achieve the desired outcome. In this work I wanted to extend my technical process and develop more transparency than I had previously used with this medium. This intention was ignited by revisiting the watercolours of Paul Cezanne, (1839-1906), (fig 25).
Once considered a minor part of his oeuvre, Cezanne’s watercolours are now recognized as being amongst his finest achievements. After intermittent experiments he applied himself seriously to the medium from the mid 1880s producing over six hundred and fifty throughout his career, some served as preparatory studies for paintings, but the vast majority were created as independent fully realised works. Whilst the subject matter mirrors that of his oil paintings, they ‘... express an altogether lighter, more lyrical vision ’ 80.

Whilst appearing spontaneous, the watercolours involved a slow complex procedure of building up successive layers of colour and washes. As (fig 25) demonstrates by the latter decade of his life his mastery of the medium enabled him to achieve a sparkling array of nuanced luminous effects and rich saturated colours. His washes were made up of the very diluted colour that was layered in such a skilful way that even the darkest of shadows remain luminous.

I have commented on the technique involved in the production of both my own works and those that have featured in this chapter. The acquisition of technical skill and craftsmanship is of paramount importance to me, but as Dewey again points out technical skill must go hand in hand with aesthetic vision. ‘... the movements of the individual body enter into all reshaping of material... something of the rhythm of vital natural expression must go ...into carving, painting, (drawing); which is one more reason for the subordination of technique to form ’ 81.

The introduction of both Courbet and Cezanne, in this chapter, presages Chapter Three, in which I discuss the Impressionist Garden. I have moved from the rather claustrophobic religiosity of the Medieval Garden to the truth to nature of Pre-Raphaelites and then to William Morris and the Arts and Craft

81 Ibid., p.228.
Movement, who like the Impressionists, were concerned with depicting everyday life. Whereas their offshoot the Symbolists ostensibly believed that art must have a spiritual quality.

However in Chapter Three I argue that the Impressionist’s through their portrayal of evanescent light and sparkling colour manage to depict ‘... the infinite in the finite… Art is how human beings participate in the divine life at work in nature. Art is the visualization of the invisible inwardness of all things’ 82.

**Impressionist Gardens:**

**Chapter 3**

As nature shaped and trained by human hand, gardens are themselves works of art, however rudimentary- as Monet noted with regard to Giverny. This is what makes pictures of gardens – art made of art – inherently different from images of nature in the wild created by theRomantics before Impressionism: views of precipitous mountains, stormy seas, or Niagara itself, which typically evoke a sense of awe, fear, or vulnerability on the part of the spectator. 83

In this chapter I intend to examine the impact of the changes that occurred between the years 1850-70 on the artists of the time. Baron Haussmann under instruction from Napoleon third radically changed Paris, clearing the slums and landscaping the city. These landscape and architectural changes are dealt with in greater detail in Chapter Seven, *Creating the New Eden*. Haussmann designed spacious squares linked by broad tree-lined avenues that brought nature into an overcrowded city that had been virtually devoid of public and private gardens. The introduction of this landscaping coincided with a developing railway system that provided much easier access for people to the countryside and to rural gardens.

82 Morgan, D. *Enchantment, Disenchantment, Re-Enchantment*, p.33.
These factors both contributed to stimulate an increased awareness of nature, which, coupled with the radical social changes that were happening around the Impressionists ignited an ‘...overall desire to look at the world with a new freshness and immediacy’84. By the late 1860s there was a sense amongst the Impressionists…of a tangible level of excitement, a sense of being in the right place at the right time, of revolutionary change being in the offing and a new art like a new city, being about to emerge from the rubble of past tradition85.

The recent advances in photography and the developments of scientific research into colour and light further encouraged this heightened state.86 Advances occurred that were of the utmost importance to the Impressionists; oil paint, packaged into portable tubes since 1841 was by the 1860s available in all colours. Transportable easels became obtainable, and these things greatly assisted their capacity to work en plein air. These rapid changes made a huge contribution to the Impressionists sense of modernity, which was now becoming evident in the garden.

Nineteenth century France was an age of garden culture … and no century before or since has given birth to a group of artists who were able to evoke the atmosphere of the garden with such lyrical probity. 87 The Impressionists worked from a wide variety of subject matter, invariably in the open air because it better facilitated their objectives. They reacted against academic teaching, renounced historical and imaginative subject matter and shunned the idea of conveying intense personal emotion; all of which were very popular with other artists and the public. They had no specific aims, defined principals, or rigid manifestos but were interested in the objective recording of contemporary life and of trying to capture an impression of what

84 Ibid.
85 Thompson, B, Impressionism, Origins, Practice, Reception, Thames and Hudson: London. 2000, p.100.
87 Bumpus, J, Impressionists Garden, p. 9.
the eye sees, concentrating on the fleeting and the casual. Although usually associated with landscape, their range of subject matter was immensely varied and to a greater or lesser extent they all painted the garden. Painting how the garden looked; what happened in the garden; the views from the gardens, and they made still life paintings of the flowers that grew in the garden.

Previously for the Romantics, nature was shown to be all-powerful, as Frederick Church’s painting of the *Niagara Falls* (fig 26) shows; nature uncompromising, hostile and often intimidating to the individual. Whereas the nature we are introduced to in the Impressionist garden is one that retains the essential stamp of human intervention. Its close proximity and familiarity provided an easily accessible subject to portray the workings of nature, the shifting patterns and effects of the seasons, and weather; light and atmosphere; these were the things that so fascinated the Impressionists.

![Niagara Falls](image1.png) ![Garden Scene in Brittany](image2.png)

Fig 26, Frederick Church 1867, *Niagara Falls*, Oil on canvas, 260-x231 cm
Scotland. Oil on canvas, 54 x 56 cm,

Fig 27, Pierre Auguste Renoir 1886, *Garden Scene in Brittany*, National Gallery of Scotland. Oil on canvas, 54 x 56 cm,

The *Garden Scene in Brittany* (fig 27) painted by the Impressionist painter Pierre-August Renoir (1841-1919) is in direct contrast to *Niagara Falls* (fig 26) which shows us a manicured, tranquil and completely controlled environment. Renoir summed up his and the Impressionists motives when he said
'Give me an apple tree in a suburban garden. I haven't the slightest need of the Niagara Falls' 88.

The garden life the Impressionists depicted was a selective one; they generally edited those seasons and seasonal aspects that hinted at anything other than spring, summer and early autumn. Although the effects of frost and snow were sometimes included in paintings by Monet and Alfred Sisley (1839-99) those adverse conditions seldom occur in their, or any of the other Impressionist paintings, of the Garden. The Impressionists painted the ‘... warm weather seasons when nature and humankind are lured into a close unity of spirit and activity.’89 Portrayed is a perfect world of sunshine and colour, where mostly leisure pursuits, moments of family life and harmonious social interaction occur.

Although it is rare to witness any work or the undertaking of domestic tasks in the garden, images do exist. The Impressionists did not intend to accurately portray the garden; consistent with their overall aims, they primarily wished to explore light and atmosphere striving to capture the overall sensation. There is seldom any botanical information, and only a few details about the layout of the flowerbeds and only vague clues as to the species depicted.

There was a difference between the French and the English version of a garden picture. The pictorial intentions of the English garden painters was to present a perfect garden, whereas the Impressionists were content to present nature as they found it, with no attempt to manicure or elaborate. The stylised intervention by the English garden paintings is completely absent from the French Impressionist’s gardens. English Garden painters such as George Samuel Elwood (1851-1943) (fig 28) were highly selective, exaggerating the ordered flowerbeds and providing eye-leading vistas throughout the painting.

88 Willsdon, C.A.P, In the Gardens of Impressionism, p. 189.
All of this is in direct contrast to the Monet painting of *Garden at Argenteuil. (The Dahlias)*, (fig 29), where the garden appears to be engulfing the house and there is no discernable route to move around.

In comparison the Impressionist’s selection of subject matter from the garden is quite arbitrary and any patch or corner, seemed appropriate. The French favoured a more natural look aspiring to what the novelist Emile Zola described in his novel *La Curee* , ‘… as a smiling bit of nature’ 90, ‘… what chiefly distinguished the Impressionists from the English artists … was the inventive manner in which they animated that bit of nature’ 91.

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90 Ibid., p. 7.
91 Ibid.
Fig 29, Claude Monet 1873, *Monet’s Garden at Argenteuil (the Dahlias)*, Oil on Canvas, 61x 8 2.5 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington.

With the Monet painting, we see a much more chaotic layout; the dahlia beds are random by comparison and there is none of the organised clumping of flower species that we see in (fig 28). The trees Monet has painted appear to have been allowed to grow without even any hint of pruning in comparison to Elwood’s tamed topiary trees. The contrast continues into the sky with Elwood presenting us with placid cloud cover whilst Monet shows us turbulent conditions.

The Monet painting (Fig 29) as with all the Impressionists, illustrates how these painters created a palette from the colours of the garden, concentrating on pure and contrasting colours; colours, which themselves generate light. They used the bright colours of outdoors to dissolve the individual features of flowers and foliage and present a display of vibrant colour, often only just recognizable.

By liberating him or herself from the need to accumulate precise details on the canvas, the Impressionist could concentrate all of their energies on capturing the intangible and changing elements of light and air - the essence of outdoors.92

92 Ibid., p. 7.
When the Impressionists worked over their plein air paintings in the studio it was to reinforce and convey the unifying effect of light, always trying to retain the spontaneity and freshness of their first impression; unlike the English they were not trying to improve and better present the subject. For centuries there had been a rigid order about the French Gardening style, as illustrated by the gardens surrounding the Palace at Versailles. The Impressionists demonstrated little interest in painting these man-made manicured vistas and even when they focused on the parks and formal gardens in and around Paris the picturesque views chosen were usually modified by painting them at an extreme angle or deliberately screening off part of a framed view, (fig 30).

Fig 30, Claude Monet 1867, The Garden of the Princess, Oil on canvas, 91 x 62 cm, Oberlin College, Ohio, USA.
Impressionism: Influence and Background:

Impressionism owes its significance to a variety of artistic and social issues and in Chapters Four and Five I speak more about the influence that Japan and individual artists had on Monet and the Impressionists. It is appropriate though to acknowledge that the artistic roots of Impressionism are attributed in part to the Barbizon School, a group of French landscape painters who took their name from a small village on the outskirts of the forest of Fontainebleau, thirty miles from Paris. The group who lived in the rural area were united in their opposition to classical conventions in painting (favoured by the Salon and the popular taste of the time). They were interested in landscape painting for its own sake, a notion relatively new to French Art at the time. They were influenced by the English painters John Constable (1776-1837) and Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851) and the C17th Dutch School of landscape painting.

Their practice was to paint small studies in the Forest direct from nature, and then develop these into larger paintings in their studio,(fig 31) ‘... really nothing more than two empty barns belonging to the Inn at Barbizon’.93 This was fundamentally different to the Impressionists who generally attempted to complete the entire painting in the open air. The Barbizon School had a fondness for nature, stimulated by the spirit of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1728) a Swiss philosopher who influenced the Romantic movements of France, Germany and Britain. Rousseau’s writings awakened the sensibilities of his countrymen to the pleasures of walking, to the beauties of wild flowers and to the benefits of studying nature; ‘ ... the countryside is my study ’,94 he declared.

Through the Barbizon School, his writings influenced the Impressionists, ‘... but where Rousseau and the Barbizon artists favoured nature in the raw’, 95 the Impressionists ‘... were drawn back to the charms of nature as garden,’ 96 and so located their activities back in the gardens and manicured spaces of Paris. The Impressionists were seen as a somewhat contentious group but ‘... rebellious though the Impressionists were, according to the expectations of the day, their contribution can be seen as a continuation, not a break with past tendencies’ 97. The Impressionists were simply following a long established tradition of standing before nature and studying atmospheric effects, connecting historically ‘... with a much lengthier attempt by artists to convey the atmosphere of open air freshly and faithfully.’ 98 This tradition was reinforced by the growing interest in nature during the nineteenth century and the public enthusiasm for gardening and the emergence of Nineteenth century France as an age of garden culture. 99

95 Ibid.
96 Ibid., p. 8.
97 Ibid., p. 13
98 Ibid.
99 Ibid., p. 14
The Impressionists inherited the tradition of garden depiction from the topographical artists of the C17th century, which gloriously showed figures parading through the gardens of Versailles as if they were in the royal interiors.

We know that the Impressionists would have been familiar with the fashionable garden paintings of Jean-Antoine Watteau (1684-1721) and Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732-1806) who depicted the bourgeoisie conversing, eating, playing on swings, displaying their finery and perusing the idyllic pastimes of an affluent carefree society as they rediscovered delight in the garden amongst unspoiled nature.

We know that Monet admired Watteau, *The Embarkation for Cythera* (fig 31) was his favourite painting in the Louvre. This depicts the embarkation to the *Garden of Venus (Island of Love)*, which was represented in medieval manuscripts, and ‘... the theme has had great popularity in European art, undergoing several transformations’100.

Watteau was commissioned by Louis XIV to produce severe propagandist works; but eventually returned to lighter themes and subjects, ‘... such as intimate, frivolous, and amorous scenes between private individuals.’\textsuperscript{101} Watteau made sensitive sketches on the spot very much in the manner of his idol Claude Lorraine (1600-82), and Watteau incorporated these carefully observed details into his own paintings. These aspects of behaviour were ideally suitable for reinterpretation by the Impressionists a century later. The theme of spiritual and carnal love was evident in mediaeval manuscripts and also in the Pre-Raphaelite works where the garden is a venue for love and erotic liaisons; as I earlier mentioned in discussing \textit{L’ Origine du Monde} religious ecstasy and sexuality are never far apart.

The Roccoco painter François Boucher (1703-70) made meticulous drawings from actual parks around Paris and from these created ‘...a romantic concoction that responded to Jean Rousseau’s ideal of the garden as a cultivated wilderness for human solitude and reflection.’\textsuperscript{102} By the mid eighteenth century people had tired of magnificent vistas and wanted nature to appear more authentic and they were more than content to accept approximation as long as nature felt genuine. While Fragonard (fig 33) and Watteau demonstrate a rigid protocol of behaviour, dress and etiquette, the Impressionists show a more relaxed and at times disjointed portrayal of what is occurring. In the paintings of Fragonard and Watteau the people are wealthy aristocrats, distant and preoccupied, whereas in the Impressionist garden paintings ‘... they are more present themselves, perhaps rather self consciously, as ordinary modern folk’.\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{101} Impelluso, L \textit{Gardens in Art}, p.354.  
\textsuperscript{102} Bumpus, J, p.14.  
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., p.264.
The sort of human interaction we had seen in the garden paintings of history could no longer exist in the Impressionist garden for several reasons.

Fig 33, Jean-Honore Fragonard 1776, *The Swing*, Oil on canvas, 82 x 64 cm Wallace Collection, London.

Gardens were organized differently and their function was changing. The garden was no longer displayed as a symbol of wealth and power or as a religious enclave providing physical and spiritual sustenance. Baron Haussmann’s reconfiguration and virtual destruction of Paris encouraged the garden to become the vital link for people to connect with nature. The recently developed train lines provided access to the landscape outside of Paris, and new private gardens sprung up amongst the housing plots and subdivisions, often provided an oasis from the encroaching industry that followed the train tracks.

The Impressionists joined all the other crowds of day-trippers and pleasure seekers travelling into the rural environs on their leisure days to be part of the landscape and nature, (fig 34). The gardens they painted were not just simple extensions of the landscape; their gardens offered different experiences, they
drew strength from being opposed to the new city life and provided a fresh association and reconnection with traditions apparently lost in the city. The Impressionist paintings of the public gardens and communal spaces became symbols of modernity. Corners of nature enclosed in public parks and urban spaces became everyman’s notion of earthly paradise.

At the edges of the city beyond the line that divided the urban garden and nature proper, they painted the poppy-filled meadows, populated by strolling day-trippers enjoying the notion of the extended gardens away from the Metropolis (fig 34). Nature in the Impressionist garden was depicted as a social, not a solitary pleasure and seldom do we see just a solitary figure. In contrast the images of the private garden provide a world of elusive, and often ambiguous spaces, with views seldom extending beyond the garden. There is seldom indication as to how we negotiate the garden; there are virtually no statues, (emphasizing the difference between the private and the public garden).
In 1870 the garden writer William Robinson published *The Wild Garden* (fig 35), a book that influenced many of the gardening community and gave birth to the wild garden school. Planting seemingly random garden beds was encouraged, gardeners were striving for a more natural look and the Impressionists favoured this informality. Robinson one year earlier had praised the formality of Haussmann’s planting in Paris but had reversed his opinion opposing the system of carpet bedding in parks and gardens as a ‘... species of extensive coloured cotton … handkerchief’104.

Reginald Bloomfield supported the rival tradition in his book, *The Formal Garden in England*; he revived the Arts and Craft style, which emphasized a more formal architectural layout.105 One school ‘... seems artificial and contrived and the other

105 Ibid., p. 281.
natural, the terms are par for the course in any garden discussion of the twentieth century on gardening to this day.’ The Impressionists were very much disciples of the Robinson Wild School mode. Monet along with the other Impressionists denounced the classical straight lines of Haussmann and the geometry of the classical C17th Century French Garden. As we see in the flowerbeds of Monet’s Giverny garden they seem eroded and appear to be threatened by an explosion of plants from either side. (fig 36).

The Impressionist garden is about the sensation of the garden. Hunt accurately described the painted surfaces as ‘...the dance of likenesses, guessed at or half glimpsed.’ Monet’s Garden at Giverny is perhaps the paramount example of the Impressionist Garden, this garden was made for and determined on the canvas; the images are the result of imaginative invention as much by the discourse of painting as any depiction of an actual place. (Monet’s Garden at Giverny is addressed Chapter Five.

106 Ibid.
107 Ibid., p.281.
The Impressionists disavowal of any spirituality in their work is at odds with, to put it simply, the way the work looks. As Wilhelm Schiller had so clearly articulated ’... beauty is the infinite depicted in the finite’ 108. The Impressionists works seen through the telescope of time are undeniably beautiful. Through their use of fractured light they do seem to depict some infinite, more dazzling world. Perhaps they had: … as artists and poets sought to cultivate an 'apocalypse by imagination' they turned to Kant. … Kant’s ‘Critique of Judgement

… by extending the principal of autonomy from the domains of thought and action to the realm of aesthetic experience and judgement, Kant developed an account of the imagination and, in correlation, of beauty and the sublime. This has directly or indirectly influenced virtually all subsequent art and aesthetics. Aesthetic judgement not only mediates thought and action but also reconciles the opposition between reason and sensation...Kant’s imaginative account of beauty suggested a new understanding of religion in which art is the modern expression of religion and religion is undeniably aesthetic. 109

I would argue that the works of the Impressionists, in their attempts to present the unpresentable, through the use of colour and light, are in the realm of the aesthetic and therefore could be considered in Kant's terms to be in the realm of the spirit.

108 Morgan, Enchantment, p.33.
Chapter 4

Monet and Japan

James Elkins describes painting as alchemy; he is particularly interested in the application of paint in Monet’s paintings. Alchemy is the art that knows how to make a substance no formula can describe. And it knows the particular turmoil of thoughts that finds expression in colours. Alchemy is the old science of struggling with materials, and not quite understanding what is happening: exactly as Monet did, and as every painter does each day in the studio. For a spiritual alchemist, whatever happens in the furnace is an allegory of what takes place in the alchemists mind and soul.

In his exhaustive investigation into Monet’s paint application Elkins tries to understand the condition of the painter in action

In his single-minded pursuit of the grain and feel of light, he seems to forget who he is…Monet’s paintings are masterpieces of repression, keeping every thought quiet in order to concentrate on light: in order to pretend that there is nothing in the world…but the wordless play of “any -angled light” congregating endlessly on shadowed cliffs and ocean waves. The paintings are about that beautiful moment when the dull oil paste, squeezed from the lead tube, becomes a new substance that is neither liquid, solid, cream, wax, varnish or vaseline; and they are about the body’s turning against itself, and within itself, to make shapes that the eye cannot recognise as human marks.

Elkins draws no conclusions but questions whether painting may be more like a ‘...religious epiphany than a tiresome scholarly routine’. Perhaps it is both, it seems that an immersion in process and material can lead to a moment of supreme profound comprehension. Monet’s lifetime of intense observation, according to Spate had led to a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness between all forms of being, a vision of ‘truth itself’.

111 Ibid., p.4.
112 Ibid., p.10.
113 Ibid., p.18.
114 Ibid., p. 174.
Look at the flower with its petals turned back by the wind, is that not truth itself? ...and here, near the woman by Hokusai, look at this bathing scene: look at these bodies, can you not feel their firmness? They are made of flesh, yet are described only by their outline. What we particularly appreciated above all in the West was the bold fashion of defining their subjects: those people have taught us to compose differently, there’s no doubt about that. (Monet to the Duc de Trevise, 1920)\textsuperscript{116}.

Japanese art influenced Monet; not so much as a stylistic device but in suggesting ways that he could express a modern relationship to nature. Monet did not visit Japan but the influence that Japan had on his work and his Garden at Giverny was profound. This influence was instrumental in generating new departures and directions in his work that was evident from the work produced in his twenties until the production of the water lily paintings in his eighties. The consistency and longevity of the influence can be attributed, not only to his interest in the essence and philosophy of the Japanese Garden, but also to the paintings and prints and artefacts to be seen in Paris at this time. These things ‘...influence not only his style and his subject matter, but also the very way he saw and felt nature’\textsuperscript{117}.

A distinction must be made here between Monet’s response to Japanese artefacts and to the fashionable trend of collecting anything pertaining to Japan in the latter part of the C19th and early C20th. Monet demonstrated no desire to surround himself with rare and precious Japanese objects; he was much more interested in the notion of the Japanese environment as a completely aestheticized space and that the home, completed by the garden was the embodiment of this. Monet went to great lengths in decorating his house choosing separate colours for each of the various rooms, including the now famous yellow dining room complete with yellow and blue crockery.

\textsuperscript{115} Spate, V, Bromfield, D, Monet and Japan, p.3.  
\textsuperscript{117} Spate, V. Bromfield, D, Monet and Japan, p.3.
Monet began to collect Japanese prints early in his career; he took them with him as he moved from house to house. They were not in fantastic condition and there is mention that one or two had been attached to pieces of wallpaper as temporary support indicating that Monet did not view the prints as prized collectors items but rather, ‘... his fascination was with Japanese pictorial art and what it could tell him about representing the natural world’ 118.

Japanese prints influenced the Impressionists as a whole; the arrival of this new way of artistic expression coincided with the overall desire for change. The paintings of the Barbizon school, Rousseau and Daubigny in particular, along with the realism of Courbet, had been of interest to Monet in his formative years, but now those paintings with their subdued dark tones, overall sense of melancholy and conventional compositions seemed outdated. They no longer provided the means for developing a new artistic vocabulary, required to tackle the themes of urban experience and to reflect the modern age.

The first indication of a Japanese influence in Monet’s work occurred indirectly as a consequence of his affinity for James McNeil Whistler (1834-1903) who had exhibited Nocturnes of the River Thames at Durand-Ruel’s Gallery in 1871. Whistler was a passionate devotee of all things Japanese. His paintings depicting atmospheric nocturnes of water and sky. He also composed a series of relied on the Japanese concept of dissolving the distinction between earth paintings that deployed the Japanese motif of a single figure (in Whistler’s case often life-size) that Monet emulated in La Japonaise (fig 37), a painting of Camille Monet wearing a Kimono and surrounded with oriental fans. A stilted painting, where everything is posed and somewhat artificial (even down to her blonde wig). No doubt Monet was aiming to capitalize on the fashion for all things Japanese, although the painting when it eventually sold was dismissed by Monet as rubbish.

118 Ibid., p.8
Whilst Monet’s paintings are very different from Whistler’s the notion that Whistler pursued ‘... his idea of the work of art as the quintessence of recollected experience transformed into a harmonious and unified decoration,’¹¹⁹ no doubt had an effect on Monet. With the exception of La Japonaise Monet never literally attempted to imitate the Japanese aesthetic, he was always cognizant of the difference between the ink on paper used by the Japanese and the opaque tactile medium of oil paint. He recognised too that the Japanese used a number of shifting viewpoints and flattened perspective by joining interlocking geometric shapes and relaxing the rigidity of single point perspective. Monet used the ‘... Japanese mobile viewpoint to embody the fragmentary, yet dynamic experiences of space’¹²⁰. Japanese prints provided Monet with a repertoire of unusual compositional themes that he could integrate into his own work, evidenced by the comparison of Monet’s Boulevard des Capucines (fig 38) with Hiroshige’s Evening view of Saruwaka Street, (fig 39).

long with the increasing influence of photography in the 1870s the Japanese prints offered alternate ways of depicting reality to those that were being taught in the Academies and by the artists who exhibited in the Annual Salon.

Fig 38, Claude Monet, *Boulevard des Capucines*, 1873, Oil on canvas, 80 x 59 cm, 1856, The Nelson Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas, USA

Fig 39, Utagawa Hiroshige, *Evening view of Saruwaka Street*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

This new way of seeing ‘... helped Monet in his ambition to regain an innocent eye’ .\(^{121}\) An article written by the poet and critic Jules Lafarge reinforced this:

> Forgetting the pictures amassed in Museums, forgetting his optical art school training- line, perspective, colour- by dint of living and seeing frankly and primitively in the bright open air... outside the poorly lit studio- has succeeded in remaking for himself a natural eye, and in seeing naturally and painting as simply as he sees.\(^{122}\)

A comparison of the two images enables us recognise many of the compositional aspects from Hiroshige used by Monet in the *Boulevard des Capucines*, (fig 38). Both show a three quarter bird’s-eye-view with a suggestion of shadows from the figures, which adds to the tilting of the picture plane in both works, and amplifies the sense of deep space.

\(^{121}\) Howard, M. *Monet*, p. 68.

\(^{122}\) Ibid.
In both paintings we have multiple viewpoints, even the suggested single point perspective of (fig 39) is disrupted by the figures entering the image from the left hands. Monet’s painting does much the same thing with the figures, which appear almost out of the frame on the right hand side.

The Hiroshige repeats the same colour in the windows and with the perspective describing a deep space, this draws attention to the interiors and, as with the Monet there is a reassuring sense of connection between the activities of the street and the interiors that the people inhabit. Both show a sense of industry and purpose and have the look of a snap shot, glimpsed at before looking away.

It is interesting to compare Monet’s painting of the Garden at Sainte-Adresse (fig 40) with the Hokusai print Turban-shell Hall of the Five Hundred Rakan Temple (Fig 41). Monet owned a copy of the Hokusai print, described as ‘... being slightly stained and battered.’ Supporting the theory that for Monet these prints were well-used functional artefacts that were constantly sourced for use in his paintings. The similarity in the composition is immediately apparent, with the figures arranged on a platform overlooking in the Hokusai print, a marshy plain, and in the Monet the garden and its inhabitants are silhouetted against the blue sea. There is activity in the foreground of both images contrasted by a relatively passive band which is set against a flurry of activity on the horizon. In the Monet the couple are viewing the ship on the horizon, similar to the couple in the Hokusai print that contemplate Mount Fuji. The Garden at Sainte-Adresse also has a resonance with Yoshitora’s Five

different nationalities eating and drinking (fig 42). On the left hand side of Yoshitora’s work we see the platform again operating as a populated stage and the band of sea offering a clear space before we encounter the busy horizon line. The Yoshitora provides us with pictures within a picture with the interlocking planes delivering the opportunity for a variety of connected and disconnected activities. Again rather than just single point perspective there is a multitude of different viewpoints and vanishing points, which, similar to the Monet, provides a separate area for the various activities. ‘Like Yoshitora and Hokusai, Monet has created a sense of space by making the eye move actively from one tilted horizontal plane to the next’124.

Monet adopted the flattened shapes used by Yoshitora to represent the woman wearing crinolines in his painting Woman with a Parasol (fig 43) and used a similar technique to describe the folds in the skirts by the use of transparent tints that were widely used in Japanese woodblock prints.

This use of transparent layers of colour was very effective in depicting snow caps and ephemeral effects of weather, this can be seen in *Lavacourt, Sun and Snow* (fig 44) in which Monet’s application of swift calligraphic marks can be attributed to Japanese Painting; It is highly likely that he would have seen examples of Japanese brush paintings in the collections of friends and acquaintances, and Japanese artists had given demonstrations of painting at the *Exposition Universelle*, held in Paris in 1878. The calligraphic marks Monet developed were to become a part of his visual vocabulary for the rest of his life, coming to the fore in the last twenty-five years with the water lily.
paintings from Giverny. These marks reflect the similar ambiguous quality recognizable in Japanese paintings; vacillating between acting as a descriptive metaphor to being a mark that asserts the autonomous self-referential identity of the artist. This can also be seen in _Lavacourt, Sun and Snow_. (fig 44) Similar subjects of delicately toned snow caps and flowing waters were very popular with the Japanese.

![Image of Monet's Lavacourt, Sun and Snow](image)

**Fig 44** Claude Monet, _Lavacourt, Sunshine and Snow_, 1880, Oil on canvas, 59.5 x 81 cm. The National Gallery, London.

Unlike the Japanese painters whose lines and washes were monochromatic, Monet’s calligraphic marks were coloured and in this instance (fig 44). The saturated blues and violets read as white and there is evidence of the calligraphic line (that) was often painted over realized forms and added dynamism to the composition.125 When we examine the pale orange marks on the far left they bear no resemblance to anything actual, they are as Spate says, ‘…completely undescriptive and act as metaphors for distant trees. The dark violets on the lower left act as signs for sloping ground, shadows, and a path. Potent metaphors that suggest rather than describe’ 126.

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125 Spate, V, _The Colour of Time_, Thames and Hudson: London, 1992, p 139
126 Ibid.
Monet's final works the *Grande Décorations* were deeply influenced by the Japanese ink paintings made on screens known as *fusuma* (fig 45). These screens were vertical panels decorated on every side and capable of sliding from room to room to redefine spaces within a room. Historically they provided decorated walls in monasteries and large houses. In the *Exposition Universelle* of 1890 *fusuma* screens were exhibited. Their immense scale and landscape-focused subject matter influenced Monet as he undertook '... the *Grandes Décorations* shortly after seeing the screens (pairs of six folding screens) 2m x 7m he made the crucial decision to abandon the self-isolating rectangle of easel painting'127.

Akiko Mabuchi noted this connection in the catalogue for the Monet and Japan Exhibition at the National Gallery of Australia in 2002, Monet's *Grandes Décorations* have an artistic base similar to the Japanese decorations on sliding screens in that they are not mere decoration but also a complex expression of space.128.

Fig 45 Hasegawa Tohaku, 1615, *Shingon Temple of Chishakuin*,

127 Spate, V, and Bromfield, D, *Monet and Japan*, p. 58.
The Japanese print favoured depicting environments as a location for events usually with people involved, whereas Japanese painting emphasizes the beauty and austere pleasures of nature. The influence of these paintings on Monet became more apparent from the 1880s and as Spate says ‘... this emphasis on the solitary and contemplative coincided with changes occurring at the time influenced by events occurring in his life.’ 129 For Monet this relationship to nature, the very essence of what Japanese Art stood for was something that became increasingly visible and important during the next forty-six years of his life.

In 1909 he exhibited forty-eight of the water lily paintings that he had been working on for several difficult years of painting, (largely as a consequence of his own stringent self criticism). The exhibition entitled Les Nymphéas, Paysages d’ Eau shown at the Durand Ruel Gallery was a critical and financial success. Many of the critics felt that with these paintings were more about the visual sensation rather than about depicting nature; that they were transcending to other sorts of experience beyond the realms of a classified image. Two of the critics at the time, Roger Marx and Louis Gillet categorized such experience in terms of Japanese or the more general Oriental. They were referring to the relationship between the self and the external world He has rendered what only the Japanese have been able to do until now, and which seemed like a lost secret: the intangible, the ungraspable in nature, that is, its soul, its mind and the beating of its heart.130

Marx made the comment that Monet approved of the Japanese aesthetic which ‘... evokes presence by a shadow, the whole by a fragment’131, and that this determined how he depicted a fragment of his pool, and by avoiding actual representation separated the fragment from its surroundings. This

129  Spate, V. Monet and Japan, p 139.
allowed him to paint the reflections of trees and sky and the shadows of the
water, suggesting all of the elements without actually depicting them. This
mystical suggestion by Marx coupled with his interpretation that Monet was
an idealist, was hotly refuted by Monet and he countered the comment,
‘Insisting that he simply submitted to instinct and absorbed himself in
creation…’, completing the statement with, ‘I have no other desire than to
merge myself more intimately with nature’ 132.

Monet was a non-believer and any attempt to connect him with any Eastern
religion was quickly rebutted, but one cannot deny that the later waterlily
paintings invite contemplation and evoke a mystical inexplicable response.
Gustave Geffroy, in his book Last Reverie Before the Universe, wrote that:
‘The supreme meaning of his art, of his adoration of the universe (lay in) its
ending in a pantheistic and Buddhist contemplation…(Spate continues) ...

Monet was no Buddhist, but he had been inspired by Japanese paintings whose
very meaning lay in breaking down the boundaries between self and nature. It
should not be surprising that Monet's paintings lure the spectator into such
experience’.133

Monet was influenced by Japanese art throughout his life and it affected his
approach both to the way he constructed his paintings and to the way he
saw, absorbed and ultimately interpreted nature. As a consequence of his
lifelong relationship with Japanese art and coupled with his own exacting
demands… ‘Monet’s new construction of space destroyed the way Western linear
perspective centred on and controlled the individual consciousness

131 Ibid., p. 56.
132 Ibid.
133 Ibid., p. 60.
of the spectator. In so doing, it dissolved that consciousness into that otherness of
the natural world, which he embodied in paint.’134 Leo Steinberg goes further in
describing his revelatory understanding of Monet’s late work: ‘…and I suddenly
realised that Monet’s late paintings go far beyond Impressionism and open up a
whole new perspective on Modernism…’135. Steinberg’s notion of the,
‘…flatbed picture plane changed the notion of art, the shift in painting of the early
1950s away from the simulation of vertical fields to a horizontal “psychic address”
became ‘ expressive of the most radical shift in the subject matter of art, the shift
from nature to culture’ 136.

I argue that this shift, exemplified by Monet so much earlier; according to
Steinberg, requires multiple readings, nature and culture cannot be so
readily separated. Monet’s late paintings do dissolve the surface, they have
no horizon, and we are immersed. Krauss describes a kind of ‘dematerialization of
the surface, the dispersal of matter into a perceptual flicker. ‘137 She is describing
how we see Monet, or perhaps more accurately how we become one with Monet.
Lyotard, tries to describe this moment when speaking about Barnett Newman, he
explains Newman seeks sublimity in the here and now ‘…he breaks with the
eloquence of romantic art but does not reject its fundamental task, that of bearing
pictorial or otherwise expressive witness to the inexpressible…’138.
Taylor expresses the same understanding of this relationship between the finite
and the infinite: ‘Painting becomes a technique for practising the sublime’139.

I conclude this chapter by quoting Virginia Spate’s statement in full, as it so
beautifully embodies the experience of being in the presence of Waterlily
Pond (fig 46).

134 Ibid., p. 57.
136 Ibid., p. 58.
139 Taylor, M. ‘Realizing Nothing’, p. 19
In the Waterlily Pond, the central channel of luminous, milky greens and thick cream paint suggesting the unseen sky creates a counter movement that draws the eye into depth. It fuses into the horizontal plane as it melts into the shadows and reflections of willows whose presence is suggested by indescribable colours composed of interwoven greens, lavenders, violets, blues and pinks. The islands of waterlilies seem almost to float off the surface of the canvas, but also to recede into infinite space. Surrounded by this material substance, standing with no place to stand, with the eye drawn into multiple, fluctuating dimensions, one can lose the sense of separate bodily identity and feel consciousness dissolve into painting, and into the light that it embodies.140

Fig 46 Claude Monet, *Waterlily Pond*, 1899, Oil on canvas, 81 x 100 cm. National Gallery of Art, Washington DC.

140 Spate, V, Bromfield, D, p.60.
Chapter 5
Claude Monet: The Serial Works

Prior to discussing Monet’s serial works it is appropriate to discuss his debt to his mentor Eugène Boudin (1824-98). Monet first encountered Boudin in 1858 in their hometown at Le Havre, and Boudin’s approach to painting was to have a life long influence over him (fig 47).

After repeated invitations Monet joined Boudin in painting outdoors. Boudin was eager to impart his ideas to Monet, believing that nature was the artist’s primary teacher, holding the ‘...conviction that nature; the outdoors was the reservoir from which the pure artist should drink’. Monet refers to his first painting expedition with Boudin to the coastal town of Honfleur in 1858 as a seminal experience, claiming that it was Boudin who ‘... opened his eyes to visual art.’ Boudin told Monet ‘you must study, learn to see and to paint, draw, make landscapes.’ He later confirmed in a letter written in 1892 that Boudin had been the first person that taught him to see and understand. Monet described their first painting excursion: ‘I wasn’t thrilled by the idea. Boudin set up his easel and began to paint.... It was as if a veil was torn from my eyes; I had understood. I had grasped what painting could be... his independence of effort was enough to decide the entire future and development of my painting.’

From the late 1850s Monet followed Boudin’s legacy, he was driven by his confrontation with visual reality, a tradition initiated by the Barbizon Painters of the previous generation and now reinforced by Boudin. Monet’s beach paintings (fig 48) painted between 1857 and 1864 illustrate how much he had learned from Boudin. Like Boudin, Monet captured the ephemeral nature of

143 Spate,V and Bromfield, D, p.12.
144 Howard, M., Monet, p. 6.
things, the fluctuating light, the movement of clouds and sea, the casual pose of the people, and the sudden billowing of a dress or flag. Monet, like Boudin was able to achieve a sense of people living and moving in the real world.

Fig 47 Eugene Boudin, *The Beach at Trouville*, 1864, Oil on canvas, 26 x 40cm, Musée d’Orsay, Paris.

Fig 48 Claude Monet, *The Regatta at Sainte-Adresse*, 1857, Oil on canvas, 75.3 x 101 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Around the same time another significant influence in Monet’s career was the Dutch painter Johan Barthold Jonkind (1819-1891) whom he met in 1861.
whilst painting with Boudin on the Normandy coast. Another *plein air* painter, Jongkind developed a process for flattening the landscape and imposing compositional principals that supported and emphasized the overall structure of his painting, (fig 49), something Monet seized upon. 'It was as if Boudin had introduced Monet to nature: Jongkind taught him how to bend it to his will,’¹⁴⁵ and to whom Monet later said he owed ‘...the final education of my eye’¹⁴⁶

Fig 49 Johan Barthold Jongkind, *Beach* 1863, Watercolour, 30 x 57 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Jongkind, and members of the Barbizon School, had made variations on a single theme, often a particular location recorded at various times of the day, often at sunset for maximum tonal effect. Jongkind’s compositional approach and his concept of revisiting a particular motif impressed Monet and this is demonstrated by his two paintings (fig 50 & 51) of the same motif at high and low tide.

The Serial Works

Monet often created a series of related works, which revisited the same motif under different conditions. I will explore some of his serial works in this chapter as I too find that it is possible to make new discoveries by repeatedly visiting a similar subject matter. I have also found that by placing these serial works in a grid the interaction between the works creates a new harmony; the smaller works form a coherent whole. The placement causes the grid to become a frame, a lattice through which the work is viewed. There are, ‘...
many different ways of using the grid- ranging from the purely abstract…to projects which order aspects of “reality”, that reality itself conceived more or less abstractly…” 147.

Throughout his career Monet made many individual visits to the same subject, including the innumerable paintings he made of the river at Argenteuil during the 1870s, and the seven similar versions of the Gare Saint-Lazare painted in the early 1880s. In 1888 some five years after moving into Giverny, Monet developed a method of interpreting and presenting his response to the motif that ‘... once again put him at the forefront of the contemporary avant garde’.148.

Whilst it must be acknowledged Monet was not the first artist in France to produce a series of paintings of multiple variations featuring a single subject, he was though the first to exhibit a series of the same image in one location with no other paintings of any other subject matter evident. His commitment to making works in a series and presenting them as a unified whole was one his most important and influential contributions to C20th art. The concept of a series of paintings based on the same image gave him a common denominator that liberated him to pursue his perception of how light, atmosphere and conditions affected the changing variables from painting to painting. Monet was able to concentrate solely on the use of colour and the application of his brushwork as an idiom to record fluctuating light. Monet went some way to clarify his intention saying in conversation to the visiting Dutch critic, Willem Byvanack at his exhibition of the Grain Stacks in 1891, that:

147 Krauss, R. “Grids” p. 21.
The aim was a certain exactitude but the truth lay not in the facts of a particular landscape so much as its aspect at a particular moment, an aspect that changed continuously under the influence of light and atmosphere: it lives according to its surroundings, by the air and light, which constantly change. This was the motif of each painting but it was the whole series, the ensemble, that provided the context for the individual truths taken alone, each painting was less than when it was seen as a part of the whole: they acquire their full value only by comparison and the sequence of the whole series. 149

There had been previous examples in France of artists depicting the same repeated motif at different times and in different conditions. Monet would have been familiar with the repeated studies produced in the 1850s of the innumerable pastels of cloud studies undertaken by his mentor Eugene Boudin and the seascapes of Gustave Courbet. Boudin’s pastels were already gaining some recognition. In 1859 following a visit to Boudin’s Honfleur studio, Courbet’s friend, the poet and critic Charles Baudelaire wrote in glowing terms about these (several hundred) ephemeral studies. At the time the article was published Monet as a nineteen-year-old, was visiting Paris to see the Paris Salon and

Fig 52, Eugene Boudin, Setting Sun1858. Pastel on paper, 21.5 x28, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

would no doubt have read this article.

In 1868 Boudin organized an auction sale of his works at the Hôtel Drouot which included over one hundred of his pastels and watercolors, which Monet did see, and judging by his dated studies in and around that time was inspired to make similar interrelated sequential studies, (fig 54) which according to Stuckey ‘...constitute his earliest significant body of art in series’.

In 1865 Gustave Courbet was working along parallel lines, he had embarked on a series of ten small studies from the beach at Trouville. Stuckey suggests:
Lacking anything at all vertical, they introduce a radical simplicity into Modern French art, representing the vast empty space extending across the sea and sky as a matrix for the most far reaching vision, elemental yet cosmic. That the twentieth century artists Mark Rothko (1903-1970) and Brice Marden (b. 1938) would continue a century later to address the abstract implications of these heroically “empty” 1865 paintings of balanced rectangular zones.

Fig 55, Gustave Courbet, *Seascapes at Trouville*, 1865-7, Oil on canvas, various sizes, various locations.

Fig 56, Gustave Courbet, *Low tide at Trouville*, 1865, Oil on canvas, 59.6 x 72.6 cm, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, UK.

151 Ibid.
This idea of heroic emptiness continues to fascinate theorists and artists alike. Rothko eventually removed all recognizable figuration from his painting, instead:

…he emphasizes instead the abstract - the essence of an idea or an emotion - in a visual mode intended to evoke our response through the process of seeing. In this, Rothko recognizes that the root of an image’s power is simultaneously its visual nature and the nature of the visual. Images evoke an aesthetic experience that at its highest level can bring the individual to a moment of spiritual ecstasy or union, or more simply, a heightened sense of being.  

In this paper I posit that this idea of a heightened sense of being also occurs in realist painting and support this theory in the following chapters. Monet was an avid collector of Japanese prints, as discussed in Chapter Four, and he would have been familiar with a number of the popular print series that were based on particular landscapes and famous views from major cities.

Fig 57, Katsushika Hokusai, *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*, 1831, Woodblock.

In 1831 Katsushika Hokusais (1760-1849) first published the *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji* series (fig 57). These horizontal woodblocks present the one single motif in different seasons, in different weather conditions, at different times of the day and from different viewpoints.

Monet went on to acquire nine of these prints for his own collection, ‘Hokusai’s works were featured in a large survey of Japanese prints presented in Paris in April 1890 at the École des Beaux-Arts’. This exhibition was some thirteen months before Monet exhibited the *Wheat Stacks* as a series.

Whereas previously Monet had worked on a range of diverse subject matter, employing various approaches, he was now presenting a group of paintings of a similar motif as one unit, a series. According to Monet the individual paintings only acquired their value by ‘...the comparison and succession of the entire series’. In spite of Monet’s commitment to the series paintings and insistence that although exhibited as a group, they should be considered a single entity, he made no conditions that the paintings should stay together and was quite content for the series to be split up and often pre-sold individual paintings prior to exhibiting them as a series.

Monet painted in and around Giverny for thirty-five years, and as a consequence he had an intimate knowledge of the area, the climatic conditions and specifically, the behaviour of light throughout the year. This provided him with a secure context and familiar location for the creation of the series paintings. The first of these series was of The Haystacks (referred to as *The Grain Stacks*); because Giverny was an agricultural area, they were abundant in the locality. Monet first painted haystacks in 1865, (fig 58) and the first painting of a haystack from Giverny occurs in 1885, (some three years before *The Grain stack series*).

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In *Haystacks at Giverny* (fig 59) the haystacks are just one element amongst the trees and people, all of which are arranged in a quite conventional landscape, and as Anderson points out:

Unlike the latter series of haystack paintings, this one is very much a landscape with recognizable natural features. Although the sunlight is casting shadows on them, they are still real haystacks, not almost abstract forms affected by atmospheric variations. 155

155 Ibid., p. 187.
It is important to realize that the changing circumstances in Monet's life in the late 1880s and early 1890s contributed to and facilitated the series paintings. The first major change was his purchase of the house at Giverny in 1890 and this more or less coincided with his marriage to Alice Hoschede in 1892. This meant that extended painting trips away from home lost much of their attraction and everything that was important to his life; his family and his garden were in or near his home. Proximity to home was important for the first series paintings, because whilst making these paintings he would often work for only seven or eight minutes on one canvas before a change in light would necessitate working on another canvas. As a consequence several canvasses would evolve over the course of a painting session (fig 60).

Fig 60, Claude Monet, 1890-91, *Grain Stacks*, Oil on canvas, various sizes and various locations.
Monet started the Haystack series in 1888 after seeing a haystack ‘... glowing almost white from the effect of the bright sun shining on it.’ He experienced this whilst walking near his house and he returned to his house to bring out two canvases: ‘... when I began ...I believed that two canvases, one for grey and one for sunny weather would be enough’.

Monet returned to the subject in the autumn of 1888 working on five paintings of the haystacks in the neighbouring fields, this followed his work on a series of landscapes around Giverny of poppy fields and various views. Following the harvest in 1889 he continued to work on the series until the spring of 1890. With these paintings there is almost a declaration of desire: a desire to submit to the very sensation of nature and unlike The Haystack painting of 1885, (fig 59) there is no attempt to record any precise topography or to include people. According to Gordon and Forge the ‘... images of these haystacks are direct there is no complexity of concealment or enclosure. What we see is the stack.’ It was as if, with the consistent subject matter so simply and obviously described, there were no peripheral issues and Monet was able to focus his attention solely on the effects of colour, light and sensation. Monet wrote at this time:

I am driven more and more frantic by the need to render what I experience. Working so slowly I become desperate, but the further I go the more I see that one must work very hard to succeed in rendering what I am looking for: Instaneity, especially the envelope, the same light that diffuses everywhere and, more than ever, things which come easily and at once disgust me.

157 Ibid.
When these paintings were exhibited they met with immediate critical and financial success, every painting sold and there were very favourable reviews.

Fig 61, Claude Monet, *Haystack at Sunset, frosty weather*, 1891
Oil on canvas, 65.4 x 92.3 cm, Private collection

Byvanck, the Dutch critic, claimed that at first he experienced nothing but bewilderment, but after spending time looking at a single painting, this one painting allowed him to approach the ensemble. It was only then that he understood the importance of the ensemble that it was indeed to be seen as a whole.\textsuperscript{160}

An afternoon sun there burned the straw with its crimson and gold rays and the kindled stalks flamed with a dazzling glory…. as to how this canvas taught me how to look at the others; it awakened them to life and truth.\textsuperscript{161}

Byvanck recorded Monet’s conversation with him at this first exhibition,

For me a landscape does not exist as a landscape, since its appearance changes at every moment; but it lives according to its surroundings, by the air and light, which constantly change.\textsuperscript{162}

\textsuperscript{160} Gordon, R and Forge, A, *Monet*, p.158
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., p.163.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid.
The Grain Stacks were invariably painted looking at the stack into the light thus enabling him to see the stack as a mass of colour (fig 62). The thick texture of the paint makes no suggestion of the difference in materiality between the earth or the straw or the bricks and mortar of the distant village.

To paraphrase Gordon and Forge:

The dominant colors must have been warm: the gold of the stubble and straw fading with rain and frost into warm greys, .....the sun was low often with the intense rosy gold of northern winter evenings: in many paintings there are powdering of snow and frost. This gamut of colors allowed for extreme experimentation in an area of the palette that until now had been only occasionally explored, on the rocks of Belle-Ile, at Reclines and in front of flowers. 163

The reaction to these paintings was favourable from the start; it was as if the fundamental tenants of Impressionism were suddenly made clear and readily understood through these works. Monet’s compatriot Pissarro praised the paintings, ‘ ... these paintings breath happiness’ 164.

163 Ibid., p. 159.
164 Spate, V. The Colour of Time, p. 213.
The paintings had a profound influence on younger artists in the early part of the C20th, as they showed the way of painting in colour rather than line. This notion had a particular influence over the Fauves some fifteen years later and in the 1950s on the abstract expressionists and colour field painters of America. Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) on seeing one of the grain stacks paintings in Russia in the mid 1890s thought it was without subject, until the grain stack emerged. He later wrote, 'Unconsciously, the object was discredited as an indisputable element of painting.' Such was the impact that following this encounter Kandinsky abandoned his promising law career and went to Munich to study painting, and ultimately had a profound influence over abstraction himself.

Apostolos-Cappadona suggests that:

In its move away from the C19th to the C20th modern art witnessed a move away from the representational human figure as witnessed in the paintings of Wassily Kandinsky… one interpretation for this absence of the human presence is the visualization of the denial of death, finitude, and limitations. Such an interpretation reinforces the critique of modern art as the rejection of tradition, especially in terms of religion, and as the promoter of human autonomy the viewer (and by extension the artist) becomes the figure in the painting.. the viewer becomes simultaneously viewer and figure...modern art becomes participatory and the viewer a co-creator in the creative process...Rothko challenges us to enter into the painting- into ‘the process of making’-and in so doing to re-create both the world and ourselves. 

Monet's ability to create atmospheric light and space and to dissolve the image was an important precursor to Rothko, Barnett Newman and Robert Motherwell and many others, perhaps Albers puts it most succinctly when he says, ‘... that is what I want to do: to make twentieth –century meditational images.’ In this paper I concur with Albers but I argue that the same can be achieved through realism. In particular depictions of nature.

166 Apostolos-Cappadona, ‘Beyond Belief,’ p.23.
The Poplar series

The poplar tree frequently appeared in Monet’s paintings, evident in paintings as far back as those from Argenteuil, 1871-1878. Monet painted the majority of the series working from his flat-bottomed studio boat, which meant his eye level coincided with the level of the water. He responded to the poplars as they provided a dramatic vertical to a pictorial composition and as Spate suggests: ‘The thin trunks and transparent foliage of the different varieties of poplar made them an ideal motif with which to express the density of light between the painter and objects, for they articulate but scarcely interrupt light’ 168.

Monet became preoccupied with the intersection of the riverbank and the reflected tree trunks (an indication of his growing interest in the reflections occurring in water). In (fig 63) the poplars tower the full height of the canvas and the linear element deriving from the slender evenly spaced poles and their plumb reflections suggests a open airiness in contrast to the lumpish qualities of the stacks.

168 Spate, V. p.218
The Poplar series was painted between late Spring and late Autumn of 1891, Monet's friend Geoffrey called this the soft season, and the effects of light and atmosphere were less dramatic than those experienced when painting the grain stacks (which took place over a longer period and embraced all of the seasons), consequently the effects were more subtle. 'The very subtlety of these effects demanded more delicate processes of representation than did the dramatic contrasts of effects represented in the stacks of wheat'\textsuperscript{169}.

The Poplar paintings are built up layer upon layer with tiny interwoven brush marks creating the shimmering tree trunks against a sky of manganese blue that gradually merges into a cool cobalt blue, with the flicks of silhouetted ultramarine foliage. The tree becomes irrelevant; they are purely a vehicle that allows Monet to concentrate on the issue most pressing for him, how to capture light and atmosphere. \textit{Four Poplars} (fig 63) are prophetic of the water-lily paintings with the

\textsuperscript{169} Ibid., p.220.
introduction of the reflections echoing the description of the sky and vegetation being described mostly through the reflections.

In *The Poplars, three pink trees* (fig 64) the trunks are brightly coloured with pure oranges lemon yellows and cadmium green suggesting ‘... the colour if not the formal boldness of Fauve painting, is not far off ’170.

![Fig 64, Claude Monet, The Poplars, three pink trees, autumn 1891, oil on canvas, 92 x 73 cm , Philadelphia Museum of Art, USA.](image)

The paintings with their preoccupation with the vertical and horizontal and the overall pictorial structure pre-empt the significance of the grid for latter day C20th painting, starting with the Dutch artist, Piet Mondrian (1872-1944) and in particular the American artists, Agnes Martin (1912-2004), Ad Reinhart (1913-67) and Robert Ryman (b. 1930). Krauss comments on the paradox of the grid that is an ongoing undercurrent in this paper:

Given the absolute rift that has opened up between the sacred and the secular, the modern artist was obviously faced with the necessity to choose between one mode of expression or the other. The curious testimony offered by the grid is that at this juncture he tried to decide to do both. In the increasingly de-sacralized space of the C19th, art had become the refuge for religious emotion; it became, as it has remained, a secular form of belief.171

**Rouen Cathedral**

Monet’s great series of Rouen Cathedral (fig 65) began as a consequence of his interest in gardens, surprisingly not God. Monet particularly liked the Botanic Gardens located at Rouen and was a friend of the Director. These gardens were also the source for some his plants for the garden at Giverny; whilst on a visit to the gardens to acquire more plants he noticed the light on the Cathedral’s West Façade.172 Monet had included churches in many of his paintings and had painted his local church at Vernon. He made reference to the church at Vernon as the forerunner to the Rouen Cathedral series in conversation with the journalist Francois Thiebault-Sisson.

I found the silhouette of the church so strange that I undertook to render it…Cool foggy mornings were followed by sudden bursts of sunshine whose rays, warm as they were succeeded only in dissolving the mists. …And which put an ideally vaporous envelope around the stone that time had made golden. This observation was the starting point for my series of Cathedrals.173

The Cathedral, in comparison to the haystacks, gardens and poplars, seemed an unusual choice of subject. It was something so monumentally inanimate and static, and was coupled with all of its powerful religious connotations, it sat strangely with Monet was a proclaimed non-believer. However he had turned to

an architectural motif previously when he painted the railway stations some twenty years earlier and it could be argued that when he painted those in 1877, at the height of the Industrial Revolution 'that the railway stations were the Cathedrals of the Modern age.'¹⁷⁴

Monet’s response to the facade of the cathedral was to eliminate any hint or association with religion, he eliminated artefacts from the façade, there are no indications of any carvings of angels, saints or sinners, ‘he also effaced the signs of modern time, the face of the clock.’¹⁷⁵ Unlike the grain stacks and poplars, the Rouen Cathedral series chooses a motif that was totally non organic and he virtually excluded the sky, the most apparent barometer of change and concentrated on the effect of the light on the architecture.

¹⁷⁴ Spate, V, p. 22.
¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 225.
Michael Howard makes a logical connection with the rock faces from Belle-Ile, ‘The paintings of the Cathedral at Rouen are reminiscent of the rock faces he painted at Belle-Ile with their rock faces pitted and seen in close focus, filling the whole canvas in a single encrustation of pigment’. This “encrustation” is described by Elkins as: ‘…an ordinary square inch in a Monet painting is a chaos, a scruffy mess of shapeless glints and tangles. His marks are so irregular, and so varied, and there are so many of them, that it is commonly impossible to tell how the surface was laid down.’

176 Howard, M Monet, p.119.
177 Elkins, J. Re-enchantment, p.12.
The dissolution of the image that occurred in the cathedral paintings caused great controversy at the time but clearly these paintings were precursors to the modernism of the C20th, reinforced by the subsequent series of waterlilies from the garden at Giverny.

The first series of paintings devoted solely to the garden at Giverny occurred in 1900 at Durand-Ruel’s Gallery where he exhibited twelve paintings. They were, according to Howard, fairly straightforward studies of the pond and its environs (fig 119) but as Monet’s comments suggest other issues were surfacing.

When you go out to paint, try to forget what objects you have before you, a tree, a house, a field or whatever. Merely think here is a little square of blue, here an oblong of pink, here a streak of yellow, and paint it just as it looks to you, the exact colour and shape, until it gives you your own naïve impression of the scene before you. 

Monet stressed that these were not paintings about waterlilies as such; there are no conventional horizon lines or perspectival indicators to direct our eye. Everything is given equal attention and our eye is encouraged to meander, settling at will. The calligraphic brush strokes describe their own light and colour rather than portraying their source. The water becomes the sky and vice versa there is little attention paid to the substance of things it is as if everything dissolves and envelopes us. These works were described as upside down landscapes by one critic, and as early as 1902 Mary Cassatt (1844-1926) the Impressionist painter and printmaker had reported: ‘Monet is painting a series of reflections in water; you see nothing but reflections’.

178 Howard, M. Monet, p. 172.
180 Howard, M. p. 173.
181 Gordon, R and Forge, A. Monet, p. 204
One can see how these painterly gestures and collapsing of conventional pictorial space became of such interest to the Abstract Expressionists and Colour Field painters of the 50s and 60s. Howard makes a perceptive and accurate connection when he discusses the relationship of the paintings of Jackson Pollock to Monet, which occurred some forty years later.

They share the same passionate identification with the creative act that is often found in the paintings of the American Abstract Expressionist painter, Jackson Pollock (1912-56). What has to be considered here is that it is highly unlikely that Pollock would have seen any of the Waterlily paintings, and certainly not those installed in the Orangérie, in Paris; Pollock never left America and the majority of Monet’s waterlily paintings, well over one hundred remained in his studio virtually forgotten until the early 1950s, (when his son Michael started selling them to Museums), considering they were not that admired or highly regarded at that time, it is unlikely Pollock would have sought them out. However there are many connections and it is as if these two artists certainly shared certain aims and achieved similar goals. ‘The emergence of Pollock’s work and the Monet revival suggest a convergence of responses to a certain spirit increasingly “in the air” toward 19500’.

The classical paintings of the Impressionist paintings of the 1870s with their impasto often encrusted all over surface provides a point of departure that could be said to culminate in Pollock’s all over style. Two impressionist paintings in particular demonstrate this approach to the surface. One is by Monet and the other by Renoir, since painting the same Landscape at La Grenouillère in 1869 they had painted together on many subsequent occasions and painted The Duck Pond (fig 67 & 68) whilst Monet was living at Argenteuil. The paintings of

182 Howard, M. p. 173  
Duck Pond demonstrate how Monet and Renoir both stressed an impasto-encrusted surface.

The paintings are remarkably similar and there is an agitated urgency about both paintings. In these works the use of line is fractured and the linear function as illusionistic description simply dissolves, the line of reflective light, rather than flowing continuously, is streaked into small broken marks making the surface of the pond tremble restlessly, in what Meyer Schapiro described as, ‘... the autonomous, homogenous crust of paint’. This notion foreshadows Pollock’s breaking up the surface into atomised dashes of broken colour. Pollock had no desire to refer or relate to anything external, and without the constraints of a primary commitment to a seen motif, Pollock as Rubin explains it: ‘... was able to elaborate some of their plastic ideas, bringing them to a more radical and natural fulfilment, by rendering them wholly consistent from within’.

Fig 67 Auguste Renoir, The Duck Pond, 1873 Oil on canvas, 50.1 x 90.9 cm. Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, USA.

185 Schapiro, M.
186 Rubin, p.135.
Fig 68 Claude Monet, *The Duck Pond*, 1873
Oil on canvas, 73.3 x 60.2cm. Sterling & Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, USA.

In the Pollock painting *Shimmering Substance* (fig 69) one can see how Pollock has covered the surface with numerous shapes made up of small cross hatched lines built up to arrive at an approximate even distribution of pigment over the whole surface ‘an autonomous, homogenous crust of paint’, as Meyer Schapiro had previously suggested in relation to Monet and Renoir.

The intersections where the colours overlap continue to break the line creating a display of a myriad of spots further emphasizing the crust of paint echoing the sense of the surface trembling we see in Monet’s painting *The Duck Pond* (fig 68). Whilst the late Monets have their origins in the impressionist tradition of depicting an existing *en plein air*, the later paintings show that this is no longer of the same importance. There are recognizable connections with landscape painting but the *Water lilies* were studio pictures.
This liberation from describing the image and distance from the motif enabled Monet to pursue a more contemplative vision and like Pollock strive for a more poetic vision.
As Rubin said, ‘... like Pollock, the late Monet digests nature but recasts it poetically.’ 187 This parallel approach of evoking mood through colour can be seen in (figs 70 & 71). Rubin suggests that a further connection between Monet and Pollock exists in terms of scale and that the large late Monet’s constitute the sole genuine precedent in the modern tradition for the wall size picture pioneered by Pollock, and the other Abstract Expressionists, beginning in 1950.

Fig 71 Claude Monet, *Waterlilies*, c. 1920, Oil on canvas, 130 x 200 cm, Musée Marmottan, Paris.

There is a fundamental shift occurring with Monet’s late *Waterlilies* series in terms of scale and its ramifications. With the *Waterlilies* in the Orangerie we are confronted with paintings well beyond human scale. ’Thus the size and scale of modern art must extend beyond the bounds of the average person, for the canvas must both surround and envelop the viewer…we are challenged…to enter into the painting’188.

187 Rubin, p.142 .
188 Taylor, M,‘Realizing Nothing,’ p.23.
Fig 72 Jackson Pollock, *Number eight*, 1949, Oil and Enamel on canvas, 86.7 x 181 cm. State University of New York, USA.

Mark Rothko was one of the many modernist painters who took this idea further. Rothko wanted the viewer to come close to the painting: ‘... to be warmed by the paintings presence, to be wrapped in these glowing, amorphous veils of ligh’ 189.

In Chapter Six I will discuss my own work that has been produced in response to the notion the series.

Chapter Six
Graham Marchant: Serial Works

Monet’s serial works made apparent his fascination with changing conditions of light and atmosphere. Grain Stacks is a perfect illustration of this, and I decided to use the grid as a way to organise some of my own works made in series. I have often used the window to perform a similar function, Krauss describes the function of the grid or window: ‘This matrix of ambi or multi valence… the bars of the window- the grid- help us to see, to focus on, this matrix…they function as the multi level representation through which the work of art can allude, and even reconstitute the forms of being’ 190.

I also use the strategy of placing repeated images in a sequence on the wall, the wall in this case replaces the structure of the window, interestingly Krauss does not refer to this use of the space of the wall as a negative grid form in her ground-breaking essay on the grid. But this methodology has its own narrative heritage from the many examples of The Stations of the Cross for example, to the abstraction of Donald Judd (1928- 1994), Sol Le Witt (1928-2007) and many others. The repetition has its own rhythm that adds to the possibilities of phenomenological response to the work.

I recall being intrigued and fascinated by a statement made in conversation with the English painter Derek Southall in the 1970s when he mentioned that the American abstract painter Mark Rothko (1903-70), had said that ‘... a painter paints the same painting throughout their life’.

Renoir had expressed a similar sentiment as his son the filmmaker Jean Renoir (1894-1979) explained:

This question of subject as we know, concerned him not all — what he wanted to say was the same subject throughout his entire life. That way, he could have devoted himself entirely to what constitutes creation in painting: the relationships between forms and colours, which vary infinitely within a single motif, and which variations one grasps better when one no longer needs to concentrate on the motif.191

I began working with the notion of the series in the late 1990s and have continued to return to the concept ever since. It is a recurring strategy that I continue to find invaluable. Once the initial choice of a motif is made I am able to concentrate on the visual mechanics of the painting or print and pursue those issues that are of prime importance. These issues include recognising and securing the ephemeral elements, my exploration of light and atmosphere and the subtly changing nuances of nature, that add up to establish the overall envelope of light.192

Whilst undertaking a residency at the Vermont Studio School in America I embarked on a series of window paintings. The initial studies were based on a series of linear drawings of the studio window. These studies led to a series of eight small paintings (fig 73) in which I adopted a similar procedure to that used by Monet, working on different images at different times of the day.

In a catalogue essay William Wright accurately described both my intentions and reasons for undertaking these sequential paintings. ‘[They are in] ...contrast to the more time-intensive larger works and can be spontaneously realised one after another during successive short time available periods, and the sequential observations, the studiously repeated versions he does in order to get ever closer to the full comprehension of his subject.’193.

191 Stuckey, C. The Repeating Image, p. 95.
192 A term Joseph Turner used and later adopted by the Impressionists that referred to an envelope as a metaphor for parcelling consistent light throughout the painting. For the Impressionists it was also studio slang for atmosphere. Spate, V. Colour of Time, p. 205.
The New York Skyline (fig 74) series was done over a number of years, I visited New York several times, returning to the same studio working and reworking the canvases. Unlike the Vermont Window Series I varied the window grid that enabled me to give more or less emphasis to the frosted glass. The frosted glass, while absorbing the colour from outside, still reflected the light from inside the room which changed over the course of the day and evening. The frosted panels become almost abstract rectangles of backlit colour; the luminous sky unquestionably makes reference to the windows of Redon and Friedrich, (Chapter Eight). Whereas, in the final painting in this series, the open window places the viewer squarely back in reality.
My series works have also developed as a result of working directly *en plein air* in gardens and parks; this subject matter appeals to me because of my interest in garden culture generally. The parks and gardens that I have worked in can be as different as a small patch of green, totalling a few square metres, to parks with highly ordered structured flowerbeds and manicured lawns, to vast areas of isolated wilderness. The parks that meet the shoreline of Sydney Harbour, particularly those near my inner city studio have become a significant feature in my work. The parks offer an ease of access and convenience compared to the logistics and upheaval involved in planning a painting trip to the bush. Also the use of a familiar, even domestic landscape follows the tradition of the
Impressionists, who chose not to paint the grand landscape of the sublime but something more human and real. Interestingly this use of the home turf became a part of the local Australian genre, to quote John Macdonald: ‘The Heidelberg artists, whose works would help, establish an image of the typical Australian landscape, rarely venturing beyond the landscapes of Melbourne. Most of the now legendary artists camps were within easy reach of a railway station’.

My series works are either presented as a triptych, or with several units assembled as one. This format also suits my working process as it provides the possibility of presenting multiple viewpoints. The first of these garden images (Fig 75) were made whilst artist in residence at Bundaberg in Queensland. On returning to Sydney I commenced a sequence of works based on locations around my home and studio.

Fig 75  Graham Marchant, *Bundaberg Botanic Gardens*, 2006-7, Oil on clay board, 65 x 40 cm (each panel 18 x 13cm), Private collection.

Elkington Park (figs 76 &77) is an historic park in Balmain on Sydney Harbour with a headland that provides direct views to Cockatoo Island. The more angular forms of the marine craft in the harbour are in contrast with the natural elements of the parkland and water. The water reflects the intense Australian sunlight which, combined with the shadows cast by the trees provide me with the opportunity to create an almost overall pattern, which operates with a rhythm not dissimilar to that of the tidal rhythm of the harbour.
With *Cockatoo Island from Elkington Park* (fig 78) I assembled several panels of a different size in one format. The trees and vegetation from Elkington Park became a framing device to view the island. I have explored the concept of seriality with multiple plate colour etchings. The initial works started with an interpretation of an *en plein air* study worked in watercolour some years earlier (fig 79).
The distinct brush strokes anticipated the printmaking procedure that involved using a brush and sugar lift process. Maintaining the directness and transparency of the brush stroke is very important when I am making watercolours and I wanted to retain that quality in the prints. These works were influenced by technique used by Georges Seurat (1859-91), in the panel study (fig 80) the brush strokes and translucent quality of the paint are very evident. Seurat used a heavily charged brush, applied without disturbing the colour underneath. These panels, invariably done as studies, demonstrate a spontaneous quality when compared to his finished Pointillist paintings, which relied on a more scientific understanding of colour theory and as a consequence of this became much more rigid in structure.
Fig 80 Georges Seurat, *Woods in Barbizon*, 1883,
Oil on Panel, 16 x25 cm, Private collection.

Fig 81 Graham Marchant, *Canopy, Changing Light*, 2004-7, (Single-state) Multiple plate colour etching, 23 x 20 cm.
Fig 82 Graham Marchant, Multiple plate colour etching, 23 x 20 cm.
In the *Canopy Changing Light* series I employed the *la poupée* process, which involved applying more than one colour onto the same plate without the colours contaminating each other. In the *Canopy Series* I used five plates printed in succession with wet on dry ink, using transparent layers of colour, that allowed an optical mix, not dissimilar to Seurat (fig 80). Changing the order of printing resulted in a different outcome for each print and the purpose was to describe a passage of time and changing light. I then utilised this process to make a much larger assemblage, developing eighteen prints as a sequence and framing them as one (fig 84).

Fig 83 Graham Marchant, *Canopy, Changing Light, (Series 1)* 2005-7, Multiple plate colour etching, 106 x 76cm, Collection, the Artist.
This framing device captures the sensation of time passing but also makes reference to the minimalist notion of repetition, the element of repetition ‘... includes notions of multiplicity, or repetition in both time and place’195. I use the framing device and rhythm of the repeated image to form a parallel “beat!” with that of the tonal gradation.

I commenced the bridge series after visiting Monet’s Garden at Giverny where he painted *The Japanese Footbridge*. His work gave me the impetus to work with a similar subject matter, and I chose a location in Paris at Park St. Vincennes, where the bridge and reflections referred to the Monet without being too derivative.

195 Harris, C. The Element of repetition in nature and the Arts, mq.oxfordjournals.org/content/XVII/3/302.citation, 12/7/2012.
I used the composition of the water colour, (fig 85) as the foundation for the series, as it was quite dramatic, but I removed the tree to the left as it operated too much like a bookend and closed the composition. This formed the basis for the sequential print and at a later date I adjusted the second watercolour (fig 86) and used it as the basis for a single stand alone etching.

Fig 85 Graham Marchant, Bridge at Parc St Vincennes, 2001, Watercolour, 40x30cm, Private Collection.

In the prints I varied the colour of the bridge to change the tonal values of each image, causing the bridge to have a greater or a lesser presence in each image.
Fig 86 Graham Marchant, *Bridge at Parc St Vincennes 2*, 2001-4, Watercolour, 40x30cm, Private collection.

Fig 87 Graham Marchant, *Bridge series 1*, 2005, Multiple plate colour etching, 106 x 76 cm, (Each plate 40 x 30 cm), Private collection.
Wetlands, Changing Light, (fig 88) is a series of multiple plate etchings based on a wetland area. The colour variations and the vertical trees clearly refer to Monet's paintings of the Grain-Stacks and to the Poplar Trees on the Banks of the Epte. (p. 93-96).

![Image of Wetlands, Changing Light etchings]

Fig 88, Graham Marchant, Wetlands, Changing Light, 2006-8, Multiple plate colour etching, 85x75 cm, Collection: the Artist.

Wetlands, Changing Light (fig 88) started as a watercolour, and I simultaneously worked an etching plate en plein air. I established the image using the direct sugar lift process that provided me with a tonal image that I then printed and offset onto four similar size plates. The inked image on each plate acted as a resist to the acid that allowed me to lightly bite the plate and work up subsequent areas both outside of the initial aquatint section and in the overlapping areas, I used a combination of tonal areas and line to create the final image. I wanted to create the Impressionist effect of shimmering, changing light, and depending on the time of day and nature of the light, to indicate the dissolution of the forms caused by the changing conditions.
Chapter 7
Creating the New Eden

...Once upon a time there was a garden kingdom ruled by a wise prince. He was loved by all and looked upon as a father. He needed no soldiers. His court, though small, attracted the best minds from near and far and gained great renown for its culture and philanthropy.196

The quote above describes the garden kingdom of Prince Franz von Anhalt-Dessau of Worlitz; it is not the beginning of a fairy tale but a description of a real garden state which: ‘... gave shape to a vision of Arcadia and enlightened reason for an entire generation...it is as if one were to pass through a fairy-tale... remarked Goethe...you gardeners, painters and poets, philosophers, go to Worlitz.’197 Here, politics was transcended by the imagined perfect place, or state of things, of Utopia or of Arcadia, the perfect rustic paradise. This vision, no doubt, inspired Louis Napoleon Bonaparte X1V, in his desire to remake Paris. The changes he introduced were to have a profound effect on the paintings of the Impressionists. They were idealistic in their desire to be a part of, and to represent a new and better modern world, Barnett Newman, so much later, explains this desire: ‘We are reassessing man’s natural desire for the exalted, for a concern with our relationship to the absolute emotions. We do not need the props of an outmoded and antiquated legend. We are creating images whose reality is self-evident...’198.

The rapid changes of the latter half of the nineteenth century in Paris, were brought about by industrialization, political unrest and radical discoveries in science, all of which contributed to general social upheaval and the population shifting to the cities.

197 Ibid.
The Impressionists ‘... wanted to render the visible world as they experienced it subjectively: unstable, evanescent and elusive.’ 199 It seems relevant to describe the changing world in which the Impressionists lived in order to understand their motivations and commitment to a portrayal of the changing nature of everyday life. Paris, by the end of the 1830s was over crowded and had serious problems with health and hygiene. The immediate need for change was realised in 1832, when twenty thousand people died from a cholera outbreak. Following his elevation to Emperor in 1852 Louis Napoleon Bonaparte X1V immediately set about radically changing Paris. Napoleon appointed Baron Haussmann (1809-1891) as the prefect of Paris to remove the slum dwellings and redesign the city.

Broad boulevards were built that allowed quick access from the newly built railway stations to the city centre (for the troops if necessary). These were designed to be too wide to erect barricades, following the experience of the uprisings and street demonstrations of the French revolution. To improve sanitation the slum dwellings and alleyways were demolished and replaced with wide tree lined streets linking the suburbs with the city centre. As Dixon Hunt says, ‘Demolition and reconstruction destroyed the intimacies of the old city in the interests of wide public spaces’ 200.

To his critics, and there were many, Haussmann destroyed the old city, but he shared with Napoleon an interest in public gardens and parks and this is what transformed Paris (fig 89). Napoleon had been impressed with London, a city that had been dramatically changed by the Industrial Revolution and largely re-built following the Great Fire of London (1666). He was particularly impressed with the plentiful and beautiful London Parks, something he wanted to emulate in Paris.

200 Dixon Hunt, J. Gardens and the Picturesque, p. 246.
To this end he hired engineer Jean-Charles Alphand (1817-1891) as Haussmann’s lieutenant who, in collaboration with the landscape architect Jean-Pierre Barillet-Deschamps, was given the task of creating the expansive parks and green spaces of the new Paris. Haussmann took on the task of busily filling (sometimes overnight) the new Boulevards with transplanted trees sourced from the forests surrounding Paris, (fig 90). In addition much emphasis was put on the creation of the district squares (some twenty-two were built) usually at the intersection of the grand tree lined avenues. These spaces provided the citizenry with places to relax, to be seen and to experience nature (albeit often amongst the fumes and noise of traffic).

Part of the grand plan was the conversion of derelict and abandoned spaces at the four strategic points of the compass into large parks for social and civic use. These parks continue to be very successful to the present day. They are: to the east, the Bois de Vincennes, to the west the Bois de Boulogne, with Park Mont Souris in the south and Buttes Chaumont in the north. Unlike the city parks, which were tightly manicured, these parks have an admirable balance between forested woodland, meadow like vistas and areas of highly organized garden beds. Reminiscent of the English Parks, with their landscape of expansive areas and massed planting, the areas were engineered to accommodate large numbers of people at any one time for recreational use.

Such was the scale of the garden makeover that one English visitor to Paris was predicting that: ‘... before long Paris will be one vast garden’. Willsdon adds that by 1873: ‘... some 102,154 trees were planted, along with twenty-two English style squares in effect this turned Paris into a make believe Eden.’

201Willsdon, C.A.P. In the Gardens of Impressionism, p.61.
202 Ibid.
This colossal change to the construction of Paris coincided with the popularity, development, and discoveries of horticulture that occurred during the 1870s, evidenced by the establishment of *L'Ecole Municipe d'Horticulture et Arboriculture* in 1867.

Fig 89, Period map of central Paris, 1870s. *Showing the many gardens of Paris, as well as Haussmann's favoured straight Boulevards and roads. The dots denote the trees lining the streets.*

Much can be attributed to the considerable industry of nurserymen whose work was made considerably easier by the development of the greenhouse (glasshouse). Although not entirely new, (the idea of growing plants in climatically controlled areas had existed since Roman times) greenhouses date back to Italy in the C13th where they were built in Botanic Gardens and on the estates of the very rich, to house the exotic plants explorers bought back from the tropics. By the C19th technological advancement with glass and construction enabled larger and more efficient greenhouses to be built and reliably monitored on a much larger scale. This culminated with the massive constructions exampled at Kew Gardens in London and the Nolan Greenhouse in New York Botanic Gardens and they quickly became very popular as public attractions.

By 1860 these factors enabled botanists and nurserymen the opportunity:
‘...to propagate the double geraniums, and double gladioli that along with the begonias, dahlias, and standard roses had became the essential ingredient to the garden paintings of the impressionists’ 203.

Fig 90 Charles Marville, 1850, ‘Transportation of a Tree’.

Special Horse drawn machines were invented to transport and position the fully grown trees that Baron Haussmann transplanted, to the capitol. 204

Coupled with these factors was the intense interest in the influx of exotic and bizarre foreign plants and seeds that were being introduced. However in Paris the small enclaves and what were little more than patches of dirt that constituted

203 Dixon Hunt, J. Gardens and the Picturesque, p.276.
204 Willsdon, C.A.P. In the Gardens of Impressionism, p.61.
private gardens were mostly gone as Dixon Hunt says, ‘the reconstitution of city spaces for a new, obedient, and healthy public necessarily neglected any opportunities for, small scale, and appropriate planting.’ As most of the population were now living in apartments their reaction to the loss of so much green space caused Parisians (to) renew their ancient tradition of ‘Rus est mihi in fenestra - window sill gardening’ as Guillauminin’s View of the Panthéon from a Window (fig 91) demonstrates.

One of the few areas which was spared the ruthless remaking of the city was Montmartre, which remained largely intact, as it does to this day, it was here that Sisley painted View of Montmartre from the Cité des Fleurs (Fig 92)

205 Dixon Hunt, J. Gardens, p.276.
206 Willsdon, C.A.P. p.97.
showing Montmartre as an urban jungle on the edge of un-Haussmannized open ground. Zola described Montmartre as a place that allowed you to believe that you were in the countryside. Renoir, instead of moving to the country around Paris, as the other Impressionists had done, chose to stay in Montmartre, living in a picturesque refuge with an overgrown garden, *Garden in the Rue de Corot* 1876 (fig 93). Jean Renoir, his son, described and captured the meaning of the garden for his father and for many of the nineteenth century bourgeois: ‘The inhabitants enclosed within the high hedge and enjoying certain privacy behind the fences of their own small gardens, dwelt in a world apart, concealing endless fantasy under a provincial exterior ’ 207.

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**Fig 92. Alfred Sisley, *View of Montmartre from the Cite des Fleurs*, 1869, Oil on Canvas, 70 x 117 cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Grenoble, France.**

207 Bumpus, J., p. 20.
The Impressionists were drawn to the parks and gardens of Paris ‘... because it so intrigued them as the stage of modern life.’ 208 but they were not always flattering about the radical transformations taking place. When we look at the two paintings from the Trocadéro Hill in Paris viewing the new garden built for the *Exposition Universelle* of 1867, the paintings by Edouard Manet (fig 94) and that by Berthe Morisot (fig 95), show the new public gardens created by Haussmann. Manet’s painting resembles a stage set with everybody (except the gardener watering) looking out of the picture almost oblivious to the fact that they are in a garden.

The regimented hoops protecting the flowers impose order and control over nature, neither of which are being achieved by the boy walking the dog or the woman on the horse, judging by the behaviour of their unruly animals. A similar view painted by Berthe Morisot some five years later shows little new growth and she paints a bare urban vista 209 of the new Paris.

209 Ibid., p.254.
The grid of the new street-scape and the order of the gardens bring to mind Michel de Certeau’s notion of city space:

…this visual milieu conjures Michel de Certeau’s two views of the city: one extensive and idealized from atop a skyscraper viewing deck, seeking a totalised and static image of the city; the other created at street level by pedestrians’writing’ the city via movement and intensities. 210

The emphasis on regulation is shown by the illustration from the catalogue for public street furniture titled Iron grill for restraining trees 211 (fig 96) and Caillbottes telling image (fig 96), where ‘... the pavement grill made so ubiquitous by Haussmann, …asserts nature’s primacy over human intervention: the tree seems to explode from its grill’ 212.

Fig 96, Gustave Caillebotte, Boulevard Seen from Above, 1880, Oil on canvas, 65 x 54
Fig 97  Iron Grill for restraining trees (Right hand Image)

211 Public street furniture including iron grill for restraining roots of trees and double bench Alphand, Les Promenade de Paris, 1867-73.
212 Willsdon, C.A.P. In the Gardens, p.99.
Manet’s painting of *Music in the Tuileries* (Fig 98) show the park as the public playground, the *promenade publique* 213 But even here as Hunt points out, order continues to be imposed: ‘…within these parks the benches, the fences the railings protecting the flowerbeds directed people in much the same way as Haussmann’s grid of avenues did with the traffic in the larger city’ 214.

![Fig 98 Edouard Manet 1862, *Music in the Tuileries Gardens*, Oil on canvas, 76.2 x 118.1 cm, National Gallery, London.](image)

Not everybody favoured the new Paris, and many lamented what it had been and what was lost, Baudelaire bemoaned in his poem *Le Cygne*, ‘Old Paris is no more (the form of a city changes more quickly, alas than the heart of a mortal)’. And Willsdon posed the question: ‘Did the new Eden have any heart? … Haussmann viewed the city’s new green spaces as its lungs, its new roads as its arteries and its sewers as its mouth and digestive system’ 215. Despite these misgivings during the nineteenth Century, people’s obsession with gardens and with gardening culture continued.

214 Ibid., p. 254.
215 Willsdon, C.A.P. *In the Gardens of Impressionism*, p. 63.
Monet was known to have employed five full time gardeners at Giverny, and his family were involved, but even though he painted hundreds of gardens, no one is ever working in them and in the latter decades he eliminated people altogether. So it is with some irony that he should feature as the working gardener in Manet’s painting of *The Monet Family in the Garden* (Fig 99).

There are examples in the paintings of Camille Pissarro (1830-1903) and to a lesser extent Gustave Gailliabotte (1848-94) where we see work in the garden used as a metaphor for social and political issues. There was a history of depicting labour in painting significantly by Gustave Courbet (1817-77) and Jean Francois Millais (1642-79), both mentors to the Impressionists. They had celebrated the virtues of rural life painting the noble peasant at one with nature. John House writes that Jean François Millet ‘... had created the archetypal images of the rural working garden in *Farmer inserting a Graft on a Tree* (fig 100)’. 216 This image, set in a modest well-tended garden, shows a peasant grafting a tree whilst his wife and child (the ultimate beneficiary of his labour) look on approvingly.

In paintings such as this, ‘... the modest well tended Garden acts as a metaphor for the health and fruitfulness of France itself ’217 Pissarro deals with similar sentiments in *Kitchen Garden at L'hermitage, Pointoise 1874* (fig 101). Pissarro often displays an empathy with working people and provides a comforting image of people co-existing with nature in their environment; there is never any suggestion that the work is arduous or in any way unpleasant, the interaction with nature appears both balanced and productive.
Pissarro, throughout his life, expressed left wing views and showed a genuine empathy for the rural working class, these paintings allowed him to present and extol the virtues between man, toil and nature. In his garden paintings he adapted and often used extreme viewpoints to present an arrangement that would amplify his point. There are stylistic indications in these later works that suggest a Japanese influence in Pissarro’s fractured compositions, and compressed space (fig 102).
However Pissarro’s paintings of the working garden are interpreted, his activities reflect his support for the sentiment noted in the *Revue Horticulture* in 1864 ‘the democratic tendencies of the day are rehabilitating manual work, even among the most refined, work, which, moreover, always ennobles the mind, which directs it’ 218.

When looking at these images it is difficult to avoid the rather patronising notion of the noble savage, whom Rousseau described as ‘... a man enjoying a natural and noble existence’219, in harmony with nature uncorrupted and in possession of real virtue. Perhaps some of Ruskin’s ideas are more relevant to this idea of man in harmony with nature, an idea so readily adopted by the Pre-Raphaelites and by the Impressionists, He believed that all great art should communicate an understanding and appreciation of nature…only by direct means of observation can an artist through form and colour, represent nature in art. ‘Go to nature in all singleness of heart…rejecting nothing, selecting

218 Willsdon, C.A.P. *In the Gardens of Impressionism*, p.188.
nothing and scorning nothing’.

For Ruskin art should communicate truth above all things. However this could not be revealed as a mere display of skill, but must be an expression of the artists whole moral outlook. Claire Wilsdon is refreshingly open minded about the paradox of Man, nature and morality: ‘… it is clear that the Impressionist garden involved a potent and often multi layered interaction of art, horticulture and politics, in which a place of labour might become a modern paradise, and work itself, engender the creative freedom of fresh seeing’.

In Chapter Eight I explore the space between the inside and the outside, so often painted by the Impressionists, the space of the window and the balcony, the space between the garden and the interior room. The grid of domestic architecture replaces the grid of Haussmann’s city, ‘…the window is this matrix of ambi- or multivalence, and the bars of the window the grid are what help us to see …they function as the multilevel representation through which the work of art can allude, and even reconstitute forms of being’.

220 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Ruskin#Art_and_design_criticism
221 Willsdon, C.A.P. In the Garden, p.201.
Chapter Eight
Looking Through.
The geometrical intervention of the window.

Fig 103  Haussmann’s renovation of Paris, en.wikipedia.org

Haussmann had revitalised the idea of the city, and how we occupy the spaces of the city. This logically also caused a revolution in terms of housing, but the influence of previous times is visible in the development of balconies, terraces and verandas, these intermediate spaces between the interior and exterior originated from the courtyard which itself evolved from the enclosed garden. However perhaps the most influential factor of all was the sudden proliferation of windows, for Mallarmé ‘... the window functioned as this complex polysemic sign by which he could project the “crystallization of reality into art” ’ 223.

As a consequence of industrial and technological developments the view of the garden from the house and the capacity to direct that view were greatly enhanced. These advances led to the proliferation of windows in buildings, Art of

the Garden known as ‘fenestration, the design and placing of windows in a building.’ This not only increased the opportunities to view the garden but in turn influenced the design of the garden itself; the layout was determined by how the portrait of the garden looked when it was framed by a window. These opportunities were further assisted by new building designs and construction methods that enabled the manufacture of larger windows with lower sills, which offered expansive views and let in far more light. These developments had very far reaching ramifications and as Stephen Daniels points out: ‘This encouraged interior activities generally, and was of course an invaluable aid to those painting and drawing. The larger windows increased the exterior field of vision, whilst the wooden frames assisted with the depiction of structured views and the glass panes intensified focus’.

The wider and lower sills created window seats appropriate for placing objects and still life arrangements. Bay windows were built that extended beyond the skin of the house, creating an isolated platform for viewing that functioned much like the balcony. The new larger windows provided a framed view and quickly became a standard device for picturing gardens as landscape. The new technologies enabled the manufacture of blinds and affordable curtains, and these contributed to make the ‘…windows key scenic devices, windows came to define modern landscape sensibilities more broadly, as a threshold between an inner personal and an outer public domain, between the self and society’.

The ramifications for artists were immense, and this development in fenestration coincided with the increased interest in gardening. This accounted for the vast increase in paintings of and about gardens. As Beate Söntgen summarises: ‘…. windows balconies, and terraces became agents of

224 Encyclopedaedia Britannica, Online.
226 Ibid., p.61.
complex spatial figures that brought new vitality to the relationship between inside and outside' 227.

Large windows and glazed doors became increasing evident in paintings, ‘…a window, like a painting is an opening and a barrier, a three dimensional view and two-dimensional object.’228 This capacity for the window to provide a three dimensional, but also a reflective surface has endlessly fascinated painters.

For the window is experienced as simultaneously transparent and opaque…as a transparent vehicle, the window is that which admits light or spirit into the initial darkness of the room. But if glass transmits it also reflects. And so the window is experienced by the symbolist as a mirror as well- as something that freezes and locks the self into the space of its own reduplicated being.229

Windows feature in Bonnard’s work repeatedly, he spoke of his love of windows following a visit to the Louvre, ‘ … and in a museum the most beautiful things are the windows ‘230. In The Dining Room in the Country, (fig104) we see Bonnard again linking warm and cool tones, uniting the interior with the exterior through the open window and door. The Symbolists 231 reading of windows is profoundly metaphysical, but this complex reading continually reoccurs in the work of artists who use the window as a vehicle for narratives of the spirit as well as the body. Krauss grid of modern times and it becomes clear that although the grid is predominantly used to describe surface: ‘… behind every C20th grid there lies - like a trauma that must be repressed - a symbolist window parading in the guise of a treatise on optics’232.

227 Ibid., p.168.
228 Watkins,N. Bonnard, Colour and Light, p. 42.
229 Krauss, R. ‘Grids’, p. 16
230 Newman, S.M. Bonnard, Thames and Hudson,: New York, 1984, p.39
231 Symbolists, A group of late 19th-century French writers, including Arthur Rimbaud and Stéphane Mallarmé, who favored dreams, visions, and the associative powers of the imagination in their poetry. They rejected their predecessors’ tendency toward naturalism and realism. Web-site, Poetry Foundation Harriet Monroe Poetry Institute, Chicago.
232 Ibid., p.17.
Whilst the grid is now considered to be an emblem of modernity it has been evident in art and employed by artists since the early Renaissance. The grid historically had two main functions: it was used primarily as a tool for measurement and proportioning, and as a transferring device (fig 105). The German Artist Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) created a drawing frame through which information could be isolated in the gridded divisions and the information transferred to any scale onto a surface that corresponded (proportionately) to the original grid. As we see in (fig 105) it can be used to locate and transfer information accurately from a seen source to create an illusion on the surface. This device preceded the printing of Graph paper, which was invented and produced around c.1800, which performs the same function in assisting the transfer and scaling up of an image. The invention and production of graph paper occurred because of a specific need, which as John Elderfield points out:
'It seems no accident, therefore, that it was invented (ca.1800) in a period that saw a great boost in the inventions for mechanical reproduction (between lithography and photography). Placing data in separate but juxtaposed squares (in “time modules”: as it were) ‘233.

Fig 105  Albrecht Dürer, Drawing Frame, Circa 1500.

I employ the grid (usually represented as a window) as a device that enables me to control and evaluate the placement of things and to interject a sense of order. This imitates the earlier use of the grid, where the initial studies into perspective, proportion and harmony were undertaken and carried out by Paola Uccello (1396/7-1475), Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) and Albrecht Dürer during the C15th. Early experiments into perspective were summarized by Rosalind Krauss ‘…the perspective lattice is inscribed on the depicted world as the armature of its organization’234.

An important point here is to acknowledge the duality of the grid, as it enables both the transfer of information and reinforces (the grid) as resolutely belonging to the surface, and to the picture plane. Operating as a perspective lattice, it facilitates the mechanism of perspective and enables perspectival mapping, the grid’s duality, ‘... by its very abstraction… conveyed one of the basic laws of knowledge—the separation of the perceptual screen from that of the real world.’  In this paper I use the ‘transfer of information’ to bring the realism of nature back into the picture.

In the latter part of the C19th there was intense interest by artists in the science of optics and the analysis of light..... ‘Light, as it existed independent of human (or animal) perception.’ Artists and in particular the Post-Impressionists focused their attention on optics and the perception of colour and light. The treatises written on these subjects were illustrated with grids and for those who absorbed this information, the grid became the template to expand their knowledge of colour theory. It is not unexpected that the grid was becoming increasingly evident in the work of many artists including Georges Seurat whose work became more abstract the more he immersed himself in the science of optics. When evaluating Seurat in this context the critic Félix Fénéon observed,

235 Ibid.
236 Ibid., p.15.
237 Ibid.
‘...science began to yield its opposite, which is symbolism ’ 238.

Compared to the Post-Impressionists, the C19th Symbolists were opposed to science and their objectives concerned the metaphysical and spiritual. However the window grid was equally important to them and was usually shown as the mullions and divisions within the window itself. We generally think of the window as a transparent opening, which according to Krauss ‘...admits light-or spirit- into the initial darkness of the room’, 239 In addition the window functions as a significant sign, to allow us to experience the outside whilst still reflecting and mirroring what is inside – ‘... something that freezes and locks the self into the space of its own reduplicated being’ 240.

This is demonstrated by Odilon Redon’s haunting lithograph, The Day (fig 107) where the window acts as a mirror that suggests the spirit is held in the enclosed darkened interior whilst still allowing us a view to the outside. Redon describes his work as ambiguous and indefinable: ‘My drawings inspire, and are not to be defined. They place us, as does music, in the ambiguous realm of the undetermined.’ He wanted to …place the visible at the service of the invisible … ‘I have often, as an exercise and as a sustenance, painted before an object down to the smallest accidents of its visual appearance; but the day left me sad and with an unsatiated thirst. The next day I let the other source run, that of imagination, through the recollection of the forms and I was then reassured and appeased ’241.

238 Ibid., p.17.
239 Ibid.
240 Ibid.
241 wikepedia.org/wiki/ Odilon Redon
The German artist Casper David Friedrich (1774-1840) also used the window as a doorway into the world of the spirit and imagination (fig 108). His meticulously structured and organized drawing give as much attention to the interior as to the exterior.

The artist conjures an image of internal space; of psychic and physical interiority…the intensely moving sepia…restores equilibrium between light and shadow, interior and out-of-doors while also retaining the… plot about entrapment and release. 242

The private threshold described by the architecture of the window functions as a romantic metaphor for unfulfilled longing for release. The longing is repeated when Friedrich appears to be making a political statement on the restrictive roles of women in society with his Woman at the Window (fig 109).

The woman stands in a darkened room before a large window, yet she peers out of a small opening, the beautiful landscape remaining out of her reach.

Fig 108  Casper David Friedrich, *View from the Artist’s Studio, Window on the Left*, 1805-06, Graphite and sepia on paper, 31.4 x 23.5 cm, Belvedere, Vienna.

Fig 109  Casper David Friedrich, *Woman at the Window*, 1822, Oil on canvas, 45 x 32.7 cm, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Alte Nationalgalerie
In *Vermont Window Studies*, (figs 110-111), I deal with this notion of duality with the window acting as both a view to outside and mirror to the inside. The painting shows the view outside the window and the glass reflects the light tube which is on the inside of the room; the window functions as a mirror for the interior and as a portal to view outside. The window-pane becomes the picture plane and this creates the illusion of the space of the room coming forward whilst the exterior landscape recedes into space.

I continued this concept of the window as picture plane with *Vermont Studio View*, (fig 112) which I started at the Vermont Studio School and completed when I returned to Sydney. The reflected lights and doorway create an ambiguous reading of the space, the reflected doorway provides an entry point into a shadowy green space that contrasts with the narrative detail and order of the foreground. The use of rich colour in the interior is glowing and warm, almost overheated, whereas the out of focus exterior is cool, green and snowy. The grid of the window frame divides the view into four equal rectangles that describe the picture plane. In the foreground the manuscripts
and curtains refer to a different time and place, the weight of history. The soft exterior space with the vague tangle of branches could not be more opposite to the busy interior and it suggests a peaceful communion with nature.

The Symbolists thought of the interior spaces in their paintings as reverberating with a subjective inner life. The significance of the ordinary and everyday had been part of their aesthetic; domestic events, surroundings and objects were characterized as sources of poetry and mystery. A potent symbol of this was their reference to lace within the domestic interior. Lace was seen as a suggestive symbol and inspired the Symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898) to write a sonnet in 1867: ‘…in which lace hanging against a window, which appears to float and vanish against the glass, becomes the evocative starting point and link for an intricate web of images’ 243.

Lace by its nature is partly opaque and partly transparent and as a curtain it lets in light but only provides a vague suggestion of what it conceals. The English artist Gwen John (1876-1939) in *La Chambre sur la Cour*. (fig 113) uses white and grey tones to describe the fragile presence of the lace curtain

and to indicate the filtered light that creates a unified sombre atmosphere. Looking through the window across a small architectural space another rectangular window is visible, through this window yet another framed object can be seen on the wall, possibly a mirror, or a painting. John’s has created a magic looking glass, the spaces collapse into each other rather like a game of dominoes, suggesting an endless spatial progression. ‘By accentuating the artifice that underlies the perspective picture (they) prompt the viewer’s attention to shift …between surface and depth, actuality and image’ 244.

Fig 113 Gwen John, La Chambre sur la Cour. 1907, Oil on canvas, 31.8 x 21.6cm Mellon collection, USA

The significance of the window and lace curtain appear again in Gwen Johns best known paintings of the artist’s Parisian attic room. One image is of a transparent curtain over a closed window (fig 113) and the other image is of an open window (fig 114), but in both images the exterior, shown through the windows is of paramount importance.

244 Prenderville, B. Realism in C20th Painting, Thames and Hudson: London, 2000, p.133.
Whilst contemplative and intensely personal these paintings demonstrate a definite sense of life beyond the walls of the rooms. The open window in (fig 115) allows the cold light to flow between interior and exterior, a discarded coat suggests the occupant has recently been interrupted and has ventured outdoors; the book left open by the window reinforces this. In (Fig 115) the abandoned objects also imply an interruption; the parasol and shawl appear to have been recently discarded after the inhabitant of the room has returned from a sojourn outside. Both paintings, whilst they portray an intimate personnel connection with the interior room, are flooded with light from the window. The light is indicative of mood; the grey light in (Fig 115) is cold and somewhat depressed. The golden light in (fig 114) glows and almost suggests some divine presence.

It is interesting to compare the strategies of Gwen John and the French artist Édouard Vuillard (1868-1940) in their interpretation of presence and absence, light and shadow and internal and external space.
Both artists indicate the exterior space through the window but they describe the interior quite differently. *Madame Vuillard Sewing, rue Truffaut*, (Fig 116) is surrounded by light; the light appears to penetrate every part of the painting, whilst in *La Chambre sur la Cour* (fig 113) the light silhouettes the figure. In both paintings the windows play a vital role as a source of light. Whatever religious or otherwise persuasion one belongs to it is impossible to discount the role of light as a metaphor for some kind of religious transcendence:

> Light is symbolic of the Light of Christ or the light of knowledge and truth. It is the opposite of darkness...One may hear the saying "I have seen the light...." Coming into the Light is coming from ignorance to knowledge of the truth of all things. When one come to the Light of Christ one needs never fear the darkness again, for light banishes all darkness.245

These are commonplace platitudes but they have some credence in the world.

and inevitably light is seen as a metaphor for spirit. In both paintings the interior is connected to the exterior by the use of the opened window and an influx of light. In the Vuillard painting the balcony rail arrests the eye but the visual flow to the exterior is maintained. In the Gwen John painting (fig 113) the image suggests stillness, describing a moment frozen in time, whereas in the Vuillard painting the interior provides a setting for busy scenes of domestic life ’…To be divine is not to be touched by the greatest but by the smallest ’246.

Like many of her contemporaries Gwen John shared an admiration for the Dutch Interior painters of the seventeenth century and their influence permeated throughout the artistic community to the extent that the critics adopted a word to describe the connection: ‘ French Critics in the 1900s when praising modern Interior paintings that had successfully emulated the Dutch Masters used the term 0recuelli ’ which translates as contemplative or mediative, from the word, which means to collect or gather in’ 247.

John’s regard for seventeenth century Dutch interior painting is further reinforced by their references to an empty wicker chair. The image of the empty chair reoccurs on several occasions in the Dutch artist Jan Vermeer’s (1632-75) work, one of the Dutch interior masters that Gwen John was known to admire. The influence of Vermeer’s empty chair is equally evident in the Vuillard painting (fig 116) where the empty chair suggests the absence of a companion.

In Vermeer’s painting of The Glass of Wine (fig 117), the repetitive patterned floor tiles are a motif that also occurs in the Gwen John painting La Chambre sur la Cour (fig 113). The grid formed by these tiles is another perspectival strategy employed to indicate space and depth in the painting.

246 Mennekes , F. ‘Interconnection:’, p..25.
247 Ibid., p.49.
According to Alicia Foster, Gwen John was familiar with the paintings of the Danish Artist Vilhelm Hammershøi. Her paintings of her Parisian room like Hammershøi’s paintings are usually sparsely furnished and almost invariably unoccupied. If there is an occupant in a Hammershøi painting, as with Gwen John’s paintings, it is just a single female figure. The light which floods the painting Study of a sunlight Interior, (fig 118) casts an image onto the floor, this atmospheric light caused by the sun creates a shadow in the form of a crucifix. Inevitably this takes us back to Caspar David Friedrich and Cross in The Mountains (Fig 1) that generated a flood of criticism from the public who ‘…debated the pictures hybrid status as a sacred icon and secular work of art ’248.

Koerner goes on to suggest that the uncertainty of the debate around Cross in The Mountains, ‘... reflected a distinctly modern condition: in the wake of the Reformation and Enlightenment, …the private experience of art and nature replaced organized religion as a site of spiritual transcendence ‘ 249.

A more humble way of expressing some kind of harmonious existence can be seen in the work of the Australian artist Margaret Olley. (1923–2011). Her paintings are part of a still life tradition that Bryson describes as stemming from the ‘…portrayal of a level of material culture that retains its fundamental outlines through long spans of time and across the boundaries and divisions of national culture: the culture of domestic routine and the rituals of hospitality’ 250.

249 Ibid.
250 Bryson, N. Looking at the Overlooked, Introduction.
Edmund Capon (Former Director of the AGNSW) said that Olley found ‘... inspiration, beauty and a rich spirit of humanity in the most familiar of subject matter.’ Like the French painter Jean Baptise Chardin (1699-1799) she chooses subject matter from objects located throughout her entire house, sometimes offering glimpses of what is outside, sometimes focusing solely on a table top or still life arrangement (fig 119). Her paintings invite us to move through the interiors of her house achieving, ‘...The sense of familiarity, atmosphere and ease we feel from the interiors suggest that by using her own house as the studio the works become part of the house, reflecting its rhythms from the domestic space around it’. 

Every room in her house operates as a studio and the furniture, textiles and objects find their way into her paintings. ‘...To be divine is not to be touched by the greatest but by the smallest’.

Olley’s work demonstrates her interest in flowers, patterns and light, sometimes a bunch of flowers will be very prominent, sometimes several bunches will be scattered throughout the painting often dissolving into a curtain or drape of a floral patterned textile. My watercolour *Poppies and Morning Mist, Leura*, (fig 120) was influenced by Olley’s technique of extending the painting beyond the room and suggesting the external world beyond.

252 Bryson, N. p.95.
Fig 119, Margaret Olley, *Ranunculus and Pears*, 2004, Oil on hardboard, 76.0 x 101cm, Art Gallery of New South Wales.

Fig 120 Graham Marchant, *Poppies and Morning Mist, Leura*, 2011, Watercolour, 56 x 76 cm. Collection: The Artist

‘Like Chardin, Olley’s interiors are casual, modest, with a sense of ease. He seems to paint in his own house, not in a studio, and his work is part of the house, taking its rhythms from the domestic space around it.’ 254.

In Chapter Nine I move from the view through the window out into the space of the enclosed garden.

254 Bryson, p. 95.
Chapter Nine

The garden as an outside room

Nature is physically and visually framed within the rectangular bounds of the garden wall. The square of nature thus captured became the garden or ‘paradise’, a word which as paradeisos in Greek meant park… attaining ‘paradise’ did not mean getting back to nature as such, but rather to a nature created by man a garden. 255

The significance of the intermediate space of the garden, the space between the home and the outer world is evident in the paintings of the Dutch artist Pieter de Hooch (1629-1684) (fig 121), whose depictions of domesticity show how ‘... the Dutch household, the cradle of the bourgeois interior, is presented as a carefully articulated private world ‘ 256.

Fig 121 Pieter De Hooch c 1660-61, A Woman and Her Maid in a Courtyard, Oil on canvas, 73.7 x 62.6 cm, National Gallery, London.

Söntgen describes how de Hooch uses the courtyard as a metaphor, with the interior populated by female figures either performing domestic duties, or reading; activities that represent absorption in the inner world.257 Whereas in the busy outside area children play and men are seen going about their business representing the outside world.

This inter-connectedness between the courtyard and garden to the dwelling was revived by the *Arts and Crafts Movement* in the C19th. Admiring all things associated with the Middle Ages they believed that the arts, including architecture, should have their origins in nature. This philosophy was based on ‘... a profound regard for nature, so that the interlocking forms of house and garden became emblematic of a fundamental unity.’258 The same approach towards interconnectedness was reinforced in the C20th by the architect Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959), himself a great advocate of the Arts and Craft philosophy, and someone who: ‘... Did not design gardens as separate entities: he wrapped the wings of his houses around them, creating green courtyards, sunken gardens and covered terraces so that the interior and exterior spaces were barely divisible’ 259.

From the C19th with an increasingly urban population more people were living in high-rise developments. For these high-rise dwellers the courtyard was replaced by the balcony, which allowed for interaction with nature in a different way. The balcony is an extended physical structure that provides a sense of security, and domestic familiarity. As an elevated platform, like the high walls of dangers, and viewing opportunities to survey the garden and surrounding the enclosed garden, there is protection from nature’s potential...
landscape. The elevated position provided by the balcony and terrace made it possible to observe the defining features of the enclosure as well as appreciate the context of its surroundings. The balcony provides a reassuring overview, distanced from the garden but representing ‘... the fantasy of taming and dominating what was once a natural wilderness’ 260.

This elevated view has enabled artists to depict the garden from a different vantage point. Pierre Bonnard made numerous paintings from his terrace and balcony (fig 122).

![The Terrace at Vernonnet](image)


The terrace in this painting not only provides a venue for the sort of social interaction previously associated with the interior, it also suggests a sense or order and control compared to the unruly depiction of the landscape beyond. 260 Söntgen, B. p.165.
The interior /exterior relationship is reinforced by his use ‘... of the warm and cool tones which flatten the foreground space and obviate classical perspective so that foreground and back ground merge.’ 261 This use of tones amplifies the specific function of each zone, whilst also suggesting a sense of harmonious co-existence between them. The women in the painting almost dissolve into the vegetation, they seem to be immersed in the garden and its fruitfulness: ‘The natural was always so interwoven with human life that …the painting ended up as the depiction of recurring seasonal events, some religious and some not. The starting-point for events was the special connection between the unfolding seasons and the unfolding of human life ‘262.

The enclosed garden is a microcosm that reflects the ongoing cycle of the seasons and of life itself. John Keats wrote about Autumn and the ‘... season of mists and mellow fruitfulness’ 263, he was not alone in finding the changing seasons inspirational. Many writers and artists, including myself, find the garden in its infinite variety an inspiration. I have travelled extensively visiting the gardens that have stimulated the vision and creativity of many of the artists that I have written about. I have also visited gardens, which illustrate, in their design, some of the ideas that I have been pursuing in this paper.

The following images are from the Villa Cibrone, located in Ravello on the Amalfi coast in Italy. The Villa contains a series of enclosed gardens whose Labyrinthine structure is modelled on a sequence of interconnected rooms. The gardens were initially established as a medieval garden in the C11th but little of the original plan survives. The buildings and gardens were subject to a radical restructure in 1904, when purchased by the new owner Ernest Beckett (later Lord Grimthorpe). 264

264 Ravellotime, (www.ravellotime.it/en/visitaire_ravello/cibrone.asp)
Villa Cibrone became a favourite site for the Bloomsbury Group, (a loosely knit collection of English artists, writers and critics who became very influential in the 1920s). The group included the writer Virginia Woolfe (1882-1941), the economist John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946), and most significantly for this thesis, the famous gardening writer Vita Sackville West (1882-1941), who established the famous Sissinghurst Gardens in Kent, England. The Sissinghurst Garden has become a seminal garden for the gardening fraternity largely because of its concept of garden rooms, each determined by a different colour. It seems likely that her visits to Villa Cibrone could well have influenced the design at Sissinghurst. The American writer, Gore Vidal (1925 - 2012) who lived near the Villa Cibrone, described the view from the garden as ‘... the most beautiful in the world’ 265.

I have been a regular visitor to Villa Cibrone and have made many drawings and photographs. Since 2007 these studies have resulted in an on going series of watercolours and linocuts. It is a series I continued to return to as the balance between the built structure (the pergola in particular) the clipped flora of the wisteria and hydrangeas provide an intriguing balance between the manicured nature and the architectural botanic structures.

In *Pergola, Villa Cibrone* (fig 123), I use the wrought iron guard of the water well as a picture frame, with the guard covering the well functioning as a portal, leading the eye into the picture. The areas of light and dark in the picture create a dazzling sensation; it becomes difficult to disentangle the shadows from the forms. The overall effect is of a densely patterned image that fluctuates between surface and space. The sunlight in Ravello is strong and I tried to capture the slightly blinding effect of the light and dark contrasts’.... the dematerialization of the surface, the dispersal of matter into perceptual flicker .or implied motion’ 266.

265 Ibid.
In the watercolour *The Exterior Room*, (fig124) the shadows function very differently to the shadows in the lino cut. The shadows in the watercolour are softer and vary depending upon where they occur, whereas the lino-cut procedure with its stark contrast between black ink and white paper, eliminates any tonal nuance, denying tonal perspective. However the watercolour process allows me to deal with the nuances of light by modelling the shadows to, create the spatial illusion.
The translucency of the watercolour glows rather than dazzles. We look into this glowing space from the outside, the well guard blocks the entry into the painting and the brick columns stand like sentinels along the pathway. The repetition of the columns performs a visual beat, a heartbeat. Minkowski talks about ‘... a feeling of participation in a flowing onward, necessarily expressed in
terms of time, and secondarily expressed in terms of space.’ 267 We stand outside observing the repetitive flow of the image, ‘… having fixed the original form in our mind’s eye, we ask ourselves how that form comes alive and fills with life, we discover a new dynamic and vital category, a new property of the universe: reverberation (retentir)’ 268.

This quality of reverberation is evident in nature and William Blake expressed just such a sentiment: To see a World in a Grain of Sand, And a Heaven in a Wild Flower, Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand, And Eternity in an hour. 269

Fig 125 Graham Marchant, *Italian Structured Garden*, 2007-8, Watercolour, 80 x 120cm, Private collection.

Blake embraced the imagination as the *Body of God, or Human existence itself.* 270 Minkowski goes on to describe reverberation: ‘It is as though the sound of a hunting horn, reverberating everywhere through its echo, made the tiniest leaf, the tiniest wisp of moss shudder in a common movement and transformed the whole forest, filling it to its limits, into a vibrating sonorous world’ 271.

I wanted to maintain the same sense of pulsating nature in Italian Structured Garden (fig 125) In a sense I am equating this pulse or reverberation with Zen

268 Ibid.
notions of the connectedness of all things. There are many different ways to
describe this connection and the transcendental moment that being in nature
may engender. Derek Jarman, the famous filmmaker and gardener said that
paradise haunts gardens. 272 Koerner when talking about Freidrich said that ‘...
it is in the nature of Friedrich’s art that all yearnings, historical, existential or
religious, are thematised and fused into one constellation, which is the
subject of his landscapes’ 273.

My Italian paintings, and many of my other garden paintings, are not so much
about landscape as they are about the enclosed space of the courtyard
garden through which I intend to evoke a newer variation of an Eden or
Paradise.

The following three images are large-scale lino-cuts. My enthusiasm for this
process was rekindled by seeing the woodblocks of Margaret Preston
(1875-1963), the Lino prints of Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) and the prints
produced by the English artists William Nicholson (1872-1949) and Claude
Flight (1881-1955); the latter pioneered and popularised the lino cut,
publishing nine books on the practice.

In The Walled Garden, Amalfi Coast, (fig 126), the stark contrast of the
chiaroscuro attempts to show a scene bathed in light; the viewpoint is
directed towards the central pathway leading to Friedrich’s mythical space of
release. The relationship of the structured pergola to its mirrored shadow
image on the floor reinforces the quality of this enclosed but outside space.
This image has a similar quality to that of Pergola, Villa Cibrone, (fig123) with
a blinding sunlit quality, fluctuating between surface and depth.

273 Koerner, J. Caspar David Friedrich, p. 36.
My intention, with the stark contrast and almost overall surface coverage, is to approach abstraction, but also to retain the possibility of the historical narrative of the garden.
In *Boboli Gardens, Florence* (fig 127), I accentuated the enclosed space of the overarching canopy of trees. The passage extends for several hundred metres with an exit at either end. The motif of a passageway, or a pathway that bisects complex vegetation, and leads to an opening or a release reoccurs quite often in my work. I acknowledge Friedrich:

Friedrich intensifies the contrast between inside and outside by radically reducing the picture’s economy of light… an intense illumination streams through …the far side, vainly struggling to penetrate from there the enveloping darkness of the foreground…as our eyes grow accustomed to the darkness, we perceive all those patches that his sketch from nature originally fixed.274

The final print from this series *The Cranford Rose Garden*, (fig 128) is from a different location, but one with similar features to Amalfi, this print originated from the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens in New York. *The Cranford Rose Garden*,

274 Ibid.,p.296.
features a trellis similar to those shown in the medieval enclosed garden illustrated throughout Chapter One. The trellis functions as an organiser of space and as a perspectival device leading the viewer into the picture.

![Fig 128 Graham Marchant, *The Cranford Rose Garden*, 2010, Lino cut, 100 x 70 cm.](image)

Shops ... *lit from within like an aquarium*, Proust writes, ‘... dazzle the viewer in a similar way to his description of the kaleidoscopic patterns of light created by the magic lantern in *Swann’s Way*’ 275.

In the above quote Proust is speaking about the Paris street-scape but he captures my intention of creating an image in which the contrast of light and dark provide a magical scenario that might “dazzle” the viewer. ‘Trees stood in half light, half in shadow as the sun lowered and striped the world in a weave half of itself, half of the approaching evening’ 276.

James Elkins talks about the almost impossible task of trying to capture the ‘...shimmer and sparkle of sunlight.’\textsuperscript{277} He describes how Monet approaches this:

The meadow is no longer a green card scattered with cut out plants, but a rich loam matted with plant life and moving with living shadows. Monet’s texture strokes help that happen by raising glints of lights that sparkle randomly among the painted stalks and leaves, confusing the eye and mimicking the hopeless chaos of an actual field.\textsuperscript{278}

In considering the garden as an outside room it is impossible to ignore the role of the greenhouse and conservatory, (see p. 117). A Conservatory is a glazed room usually attached to a house and leading to the garden. There are examples of greenhouse depiction as far back as C17th but the great C19th greenhouses, led to images such as \textit{Interior of the Hot-house at Malmaison} (fig 129) that displayed the grandeur that these buildings sometimes achieved and the more modest watercolour by the English artist Eric Ravillious (1903-1942 (fig 130).

\begin{figure}[h]
  \centering
  \includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Fig129.png}
  \caption{Fig 129 Auguste Garneray, \textit{Interior of the hot-house at Malmaison} c.1824, Musée National des Châteaux de Malmaison st Bois- Préau.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{278} Ibid., p.14.
Fig 130. Eric Ravilious *The Greenhouse, Cyclamen and Tomatoes*, 1935, Watercolour and pencil on paper, 47 x 59 cm. Tate Gallery, London.

*The Conservatory, Rollins Campus, USA* (fig 131) is the first of one of my series of works to be based on Greenhouses and Conservatories; this was as a logical extension of my work on the garden as the outside room. This image owes much to Cressida Campbell (fig 133) and Margaret Preston (fig 134). I acknowledge Preston for my choice of black and white that provides the stark contrast and the emphasis on an emblematic design. From Campbell I have tried to emulate the pictorial organization and the long angled floor plane, shown in (fig 132). The image was based on a series of photographs I took whilst teaching at an American College in 2010.
Fig 131 Graham Marchant, *The Conservatory, Rollins Campus*, 2012, Lino cut, 100 x 70 cm.

Fig 132 Cressida Campbell, *The Garden at St Kevins*, 1987, Hand-coloured wood block print, 89.0 x 59.0 cm. Private Collection.
Cressida Campbell uses a process of printing she developed after attending the Yoshida Hanga Academy in Japan in 1980. Her process involves drawing a design onto a sheet of plywood; she emphasis's the importance of drawing, ‘... if the drawing is wrong, then everything goes wrong.’ The Japanese influence is apparent in her work, as it was in Monet's.

In Interior, Margaret Olley’s House (fig 133), Campbell blurs the distinction between a cultivated greenhouse and a domestic interior with the encroaching vegetation from outside and the proliferation of houseplants dissolving the boundaries.

![Fig 133, Cressida Campbell, Interior, Margaret Olley’s House, 1992, 280x 90 cm, Hand-coloured wood block print, 89.0 x 59.0 cm, Private collection.](image)

Margaret Preston was also influenced by Japanese prints, in particular their decorative qualities, she adopted the craft of woodblock printing, imitating the Japanese prints by cutting bold, decorative prints of still life subjects.

Gingham Material and Wrought Iron Balcony (fig 135) moves away from the conservatory although it does deal with the inside outside dialogue. The subject matter for this work was influenced by Margaret Preston’s choice of a dramatic geometric background with a floral foreground.

Having looked at Windows and Outside Rooms in the preceding Chapters, I now want to move in and focus on the intense observation that Lucien Freud
brought to plant studies. Gottfried Boehm in describing Cezanne’s work says, ‘… what he observed with passionate intensity was not “given”, was not so much a “being” as a becoming.’ 280 This quote accurately expresses the pulsing fleshiness and life of Freud’s plant paintings and drawings. In the final two chapters of this paper I will look at the work of other artists who have also tackled the almost impossible task of working ‘ … until the painting reached the magical point where it became impossible to tell how they had been painted: then they were finished’ 281.

281 Ibid.
Chapter Ten
Lucian Freud

‘The harder you concentrate the more the things that are really in your head start coming out… I want to go on until there is nothing more to see’ 282

‘I have maintained a strong interest in trying to put down squarely what one sees’ 283

Lucian Freud has been inspirational to my practice as his principal mode of recording images involves intense observation:

Sacrificing what one feels, as Cezanne said, is more than a matter of disregarding the mind’s eye and attempting to be somehow clinically objective. It involves being absolutely intent, gruellingly spontaneous. Freud’s paintings are worked up … they bear all the signs of prolonged attempts; the build-up of paint on fingers and nostrils, calloused highlights, final stabs at elusive vitality. 284

Although Lucian Freud is better known for his paintings of people, in the last book published before his death in 2011, Freud, in conversation with Sebastian Smee, was asked what he was working on at that time. He referred to a drawing and an etching of his dealer the American Bill Acquavella, he mentioned a half finished etching, but then made a specific reference, ‘… and the garden painting isn’t quite finished’ 285.

Freud has continued to work with botanical subjects for much of his working life. This includes paintings, prints and drawings of plant and flower studies, paintings of urban wasteland and since 1996 he worked on a series of paintings and etchings of his garden in Notting Hill, London (fig135).

284 Ibid.
The fascination with botanical subject matter first appeared in his earliest drawings of the 1940s. These early works show the influence of the German expressionist movement and the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (new realism) painted by Otto Dix (1891-1969). Although Freud denounced the work of the German Expressionists, loathing it for its ‘...overstated atmosphere and German drawing all slipped up.’ 286 His use of an abrasive brittle line and the overall intensity of his drawings, suggest a close connection.

His depiction of botanical subject matter varies from the intense replication of vegetation within the landscape (fig 137), to the study of flora in minute detail (fig 137). His paintings produced during the 1950s and 60s often portray people dwarfed and dominated by indoor plants, (figs144 & 145).

*Lochness from Drumnadrochit* (fig 137) is drawn with pen and ink from the window of his hotel and was made over the course of one week. The drawing provides many of the characteristics that defined Freud’s work at this time. The lines in the precisely drawn boulders follow the contours of the form, while the middle ground is filled in with small spirals, circles filled in with dots, and tiny spider-like forms. The delicate tonal gradation is achieved by applying varied pressure on the pen and by the frequency of the marks.

Fig 137 Lucian Freud, *Lochness from Drumnadrochit*, 1943, Pen and Ink, 39.7 x 45.4 cm, Private collection.
Even though the drawing is made with a pen (itself a hard brittle implement), Freud achieves a remarkable variety in describing the hardness and softness of things, the understated fields have a softness about them compared to the shale described in the middle distance, and the clouds described by a single perimeter are soft and ephemeral.

His early studies reveal the influence of Albrecht Dürer and the French painter Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780-1867). Ingres in particular with their emphasis on the single sharp line, and their sense of detachment. Freud also recognised the striving for perfection that was apparent in Ingres’s work and referred to ‘... the grandeur and remoteness.’

287 evident throughout his oeuvre. This remoteness, itself is a hallmark of Freud’s work, and is achieved by the ruthless objectivity he applies to what he sees and how he describes every aspect.

There is an evenness of attention to everything, and ‘... everything is equally there and must be equally described’ 288 Like his mentor, Ingres, the degree of observation to be seen in a work by Freud is remarkable for the amount of information he is able to record and communicate, as he said he wants to provide the viewer ‘... with as much information as possible.’ 289 These early works are extraordinary for their intensity, achieved by his capacity for observation and accuracy (fig 138).

Freud strove for accuracy and he preferred that term to the word detailed that was often used to describe his work: ‘I was trying for accuracy of a sort. I don’t

287 Hughes, R. Lucian Freud, Paintings, Thames and Hudson: New York, p.16.
288 Ibid., p.13.
think of it as detail. It was simply through my concentration, a question of focus. I always felt that detail—where one was conscious of detail—was detrimental’ 290.

Freud reiterates this approach to William Feaver in an interview: ‘I felt that the only way I could work properly was using absolute concentration …I thought that by staring at my subject matter and examining it more closely I could get something from it that would nourish my work’ 291.

Freud has had a spasmodic relationship with drawing and printmaking and although he has been prolific with printmaking since 1982, for over thirty years he made no prints at all. ‘Between 1946 and 1948 Freud completed only six etchings and then none until 1982, but since then etching has become part of his working pattern and there are now over seventy etchings, all of which have been seen in Australia’ 292.

291 Ibid.
Included in the seventy etchings are those based on his garden, (fig 139). Freud does not see etching as a way of duplicating paintings or even echoing them rather that they run parallel to them.

Fig 139, Lucian Freud, *Garden in Winter*, Copper Etching Plate & Print, 1997-99, 76 x 60 cm.

*Garden in Winter* invariably brings to mind Friedrich and his paintings of similar thickets and tangled branches (fig 8-p.13). The same intensity is evident in both of these artist's work.

Fig 140 Casper David Friedrich, *Trees and Bushes in The Snow*, 1828. Oil on canvas, 31x25 cm, Staatliche Kunststammlungen, Gemaldegalerie, Dresden.
‘The painting confounds any order of vision into depth, any contextualization of the thicket within a stable and continuous “terrain”. The thicket thus rises up before you abruptly as pure foreground, like a net woven over an abyss’.293

Fig 141 Claude Monet, Wisteria, 1920-25, Oil on canvas, 150 x 200 cm, Private collection.

Monet’s Wisteria and the Waterlilies also engulf the surface and in so doing engulf the viewer. Freud’s intense scrutiny of the patterns of nature approaches abstraction and in its rhythm and repetition are a forceful reminder of “it happening”.

In the determination of pictorial art, the indeterminate, the “it happens” is the paint, the picture. The paint. The picture as occurrence or event is not expressible, and it is to this that it has to witness294. When “it happens in paint”,294

293 Koerner, J. Caspar David Freidrich p.10.
the work of art becomes something like a performative utterance that creates a state of affairs instead of referring to antecedent objects or conditions. In this way, painting becomes a technique for practising the sublime.²⁹⁵

Although I essentially agree with Taylor, I think the moment of it happening can also occur in relation to the painters who aim for meticulous accuracy in representation. Freud ‘… hoped that if I concentrated enough the intensity of scrutiny alone would force life into the pictures.’ ²⁹⁶ This is made apparent in his painting *Two Plants* (fig 142) arguably one of his strongest paintings in this theme, when speaking of this painting some twenty years later, Freud described his intention (to paint) ‘... lots of little portraits of leaves’ ²⁹⁷ This painting took three years to complete, and is remarkable for its concentrated energy.

Fig 142 Lucian Freud, *Two Plants*, 1977-80, Oil on canvas 152.4 x 121.9 cm, Tate Gallery, London.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.
There are no passive areas in the painting: every minute detail is observed thoroughly, resulting in a painting of intense energy and concentration. It is as if we are examining the image under a microscope.

Freud moved to his Holland Park Studio in 1977; it took months for him to become confident enough to work under his newly installed skylight.

Foliage, he decided, would be a good exploratory subject under the skylight: ‘lots of little portraits of leaves’. Masses of such portraits would amount to a… small wilderness. ‘I wanted it to have a real biological feeling of things growing and fading and leaves coming up and others dying.’ This painting *Two Plants* 1977-80 gave him the idea for the cover of Lawrence Gowing’s monograph on his work, published in 1982: ‘leaves glazed with a transparent wrapper. ‘Like dolmades: ‘leaves wrapped around meat’.

This quote reveals so much about Freud; even plants become sexual in their fecundity, ‘glossily wrapped around meat’. Gowing describes the pregnant nude in *Naked Portrait* as having ‘…a ripeness with the veinous bloom of some great fruit’. 299 Freud’s bodies pulse with life, they are not beautiful in the conventional sense but the flesh seems alive, breathing…part of an ongoing cycle of life and death. His plants in their veinous tangle do the same thing.

My painting *Orchid study 3* (fig 143) owes a particular debt to Freud’s painting of *Two Plants*. I wanted to make a flower painting that didn’t rely on a central image but was more an overall statement. One of the things that had fascinated me about the Freud painting was the unusual viewpoint. At first glance the plants look as if they had been viewed from directly above, but the large leaves appear to have been painted from the front.

298 Feaver, W. *Lucian Freud*, p.33.
299 Gowing, L. *Lucian Freud*, p.190.
The ambiguous viewpoint intrigued me and in (Fig 143) I attempted to replicate the same striking angle. I also wanted to imbue the painting with the same sense of enveloping, ongoing life that immediately connects our mortality to that of nature.

Movement, change, light, growth and decay are the lifeblood of nature, the energies that I try to tap through my work. Nature is in a state of change and that change is the key to understanding. I want my art to be sensitive and alert to changes in material, season and weather. Each work grows, stays, and decays. Process and decay are implicit.

Goldsworthy is talking about sculpture in the above quote but his words are as apt in describing the serial works that I discussed in Chapter Five as they

are in describing Freud’s delight in capturing ‘... things growing and fading and leaves coming up and others dying.’ 301 Freud said, ‘you’re living and your relationships grow and mature and decay.’ 302 His paintings describe this utter acceptance of the transient nature of life, he talks about the need to express ‘. . . longing and risk and a sort of compassion. These paintings are begun in hope, worked through and through until, penetratingly awkward as they often are, they become all we need to know ’ 303.

Fig 144  Lucian Freud, *Large Interior Paddington*, 1968/69, Oil on canvas, 183 x 122 cm, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid.

The use of a disconcerting viewpoint is something that reoccurs in many of Freud’s paintings. A further example is shown in (fig 144) where the figure and plant seem to be almost slipping off the painting. It is as if we are seeing the plant at three quarter bird’s eye view, and that it is growing out of the pot to embrace the picture plane itself. The plant is as important as the sleeping, vulnerable, semi-naked figure, the branches seem to emerge from the figure

301 Feaver, W. *Lucian Freud*. p. 35.
302 Ibid., p.43.
303 Ibid., p.49.
and spread upwards towards the light.

Although Freud is predominantly associated with paintings of the figure, rather than images of plants and gardens there is a reoccurring theme where the two coincide, this occurs when he juxtaposes the figure with an indoor plant that often commands as much attention as the figure itself. Shown in (fig 144) and again in *Interior in Paddington* (fig 145.)

The plants often adopt an almost human and at times sinister presence, with *Large Interior Paddington*, (fig 144) the whole painting suggests a feeling of unease and agitation, largely created by the awkward pose of the figure, (the photographer Harry Diamond 1924 -2009, famous for photographing artists around Soho in London during the 1960s and 70s). The strange object that he clasps in his right hand amplifies this unease; he seems about to propel it out of the picture. The meticulously observed plant with its spiked, menacing leaves appears as central to the occasion as is the man. Robert Hughes
points out that these two hostile elements ‘... could approach melodrama were it not for its (the paintings) containment by cool pictorial devices’. 304 Interestingly this painting also uses the device of a window, balcony and distant glimpse of sky, but the sense of entrapment overpowers the possibility of release offered by the sky.

Fig 146 Lucian Freud, *Daffodils and Celery*, 1946, Oil on canvas, 43.2 x 33, Private collection.

Freud painted with sable brushes in his earlier works, rather than his later more roughly textured work painted with hog hair brushes. In these early works the translucency of the paint and clarity of the image contributes to a pervading sense of stillness in the paintings. The painting of *Daffodils and Celery* (fig 146) when compared to the image *King Cups*, (fig 147) shows this difference, in the latter the surface is more textured, and the drawing is less defined.

304 Hughes, R. *Lucian Freud*, p.15.
However Freud did not entirely desert the clarity of the early images, this clarity has an almost crystalline psychedelic quality rather reminiscent of Le Douanier Rousseau who regularly painted vases of flowers which in their archaic ‘… hieraticism and graphic precision, assume all the solemnity of an icon’ 305.

Freud often returned to familiar subject matter, not dissimilar to Monet. In one of his last interviews with Sebastian Smee he said, ‘…there are certain things that are easier because even though I haven’t done them before, they relate to the things I have done’ 306.

Fig 148 Henri Rousseau, *Bouquet of Flowers*, 1909-1910, Oil on canvas, 61 x 49 cm, London, Tate Gallery.

Fig 149 Lucian Freud, *Untitled Foliage*, 1953, Oil on canvas, 58 x 38 cm. Private collection.

*Untitled Foliage*, (fig 149) is a case in point; here he used the same overall coverage and viewpoint that he used in *Two Plants*. As with (fig 142) *Untitled Foliage* gave the impression of being seen under a microscope with every leaf vein described in minute detail. Freud uses the strategy of a detailed foreground with a glimpse of clear grey sky at the top of the picture, indicating the infinite, or at least infinite space a strategy which I described in detail in Chapter Two.
when discussing (fig15), Pieter Aertson, *The Butcher’s Stall*, 1551.

**Fig 150 Graham Marchant, Orchid Study 2, 2012, Oil on clay board, 62 x 46 cm, Collection: the Artist.**

*Orchid Study 2* (fig 150) adopts a similar composition of an edited view that allows the detail to be closely observed without it looking like a scientific botanical study. Jonathan Watkins in conversation with Tim Maguire comments that, ‘Flowers are transient, fugitive things. Vanitas - the idea of beauty and well-being are here today and gone tomorrow’…

Maguire replies:

I started making the flower paintings in 1986- the year Max was born. His arrival made an enormous difference to me, particularly in terms of mortality and the tenuousness of life. Before this I’d grasped the fact of mortality at an intellectual level but not emotionally. At the time the paintings were a very genuine and sympathetic reworking of the traditional ideas of ‘vanitas’.

In the final Chapter of this paper I go on to discuss the nature of still life, the
portrait of “small things”, and in a sense I return to Bryson’s rhopography that I discussed in Chapter Two. Marcel Proust, when he speaks of Chardin said: ‘… Like Morandi after him, and with the same serene attitude, had made still life his vocation in life:’ …‘from having grasped that life itself in its depiction you will have gained the beauty of life itself ’308.

Chapter Eleven

Flowers:

‘What I need most of all are flowers, always, always’. So Monet is alleged to have said at the age of eighty. My enthusiasm for flowers is connected to my enthusiasm for gardens and gardening. In recent works I often silhouette a vase of flowers against a window and the sky and the exterior is often vague whilst the light falling through the window is amplified. The flowers, as sensitive barometers of light, provide me with the occasion to record the nuances of tone and colour.

Flowers are charged with symbolism - their diversity of form and colour has inspired artists and crafts people throughout history.

Fig 151 Graham Marchant, Window Study 1, 2010, Oil on clay board, 48 x 38, Private collection.

The pervasive influence of the floral motif embraces diverse cultures and religions. Plants and their flowers are ubiquitous in paintings throughout the centuries; they are also often used as a design element in the decoration of buildings and their contents. Expeditions for the purpose of collecting plant specimens from around the world encouraged the development of botanical illustration; gardening developed as an art rather than a necessity, as I alluded to in Chapter Three. In a religious context flowers were used to convey moral concepts, with their corresponding connections to purity, humility, and to the Virgin Mary. The symbolic significance of flowers is exemplified in the work of Redon.

His vases of flowers...seem to exist in a timeless dimension. Suspended in a dreamlike atmosphere, they seem on the verge of dissolving into pure colour. Consistent with his aesthetic credo, Redon chose the flowers on the basis of their emblematic significance, as in this case the poppies that represent dream and the cornflowers allusive of the contact of the soul in heaven.310

Fig 152 Odilon Redon, *The Three Blue Vases*, 1910, Oil on canvas, Von der Heydr-Museum, Wuppertal, Germany.

A strong desire for precision and information had emerged centuries earlier, no doubt stimulated by the growing interest in Botany and some ‘... thirty species of flowers can be recognised in Sandro Botticelli’s (1445-1510) *Primavera* (fig153)’ 311

![Sandro Botticelli, *Primavera*, 1482, Tempera on Panel, 203 x 314 cm, Uffizi, Florence.](image)

The Dutch painter Jan van Huysum (1682-1749) represents the great age of flower painting that occurred in Holland during the C17th. The work *Primavera* (fig 153) demonstrates his capacity for realism, his fascination with naturalism and, in this instance, his decision to use the flower motif as a vehicle for radical composition and dramatic chiaroscuro. Jan van Huysum insisted on working out the details of his paintings from close study of the worlds around him.

He once wrote to a patron to explain that her painting would be delayed a year because, unable to obtain a real yellow rose, he could not finish the picture… While viewers could contemplate the transience of flowers, their beauty was also a call to faith, as he pointed out by inscribing this Bible verse on a flower jar: “Consider the lilies of the field, Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these”.312

Fig 154 Jan van Huysum, *Still Life of Flowers on a Plinth*, 1725, Oil on copper, The Royal Cabinet of Paintings, Mauritshuis, The Hague.

*Still Life of Flowers on a Plinth*, (fig 155) painted by the French painter Henri Fantin-Latour (1836-1904), was mentioned by Proust in, *In Search of Lost Time*: ‘Many young women’s hands would be incapable of doing what I see there, said the prince, pointing to Mme de Villeparisis unfinished watercolours. And he has asked her whether she had seen the flower paintings by Fantin-Latour that had recently been exhibited’ 313.

312 http://www.getty.edu/art/gettyguide/artMakerDetails?maker=292
In 1876 Fantin-Latour and his wife spent their first summer at Bure in a house inherited from his wife’s uncle. The provincial garden in Bure provided endless inspiration for Fantin-Latour and his wife. The increased interest in gardening at this time, and the invention of the mail order catalogue provided Fantin-Latour with an ever-increasing choice of subject matter. His work reflected the influence of an earlier time than that of his fellow Impressionists. Fantin-Latour was a traditionalist, and his paintings are executed in a precise, detailed style. But the beauty, texture and delicate nature of his blooms generated much admiration; so much so that a fragrant pink rose *Centifolia* was named after him.

![Fig 155 Henri Fatin-Latour, Roses and Nasturtiums in a Vase, 1883, Oil on canvas, 28 x 36 cm, Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia.](image)

Tim Maguire has taken the oeuvre of flower painting and given it new meaning: ‘The goal for a serious painter is to make work that is simultaneously embedded in a tradition of painting whilst engaging with the contemporary world’ 314.

The quote accurately encapsulate Maguire’s capacity for embracing the art of previous centuries and contextualising their content into a contemporary realm. Tim Maguire first developed his flower paintings in the 1990s; these paintings depict an extremely magnified individual flower. Their source is traditional C17th Dutch flower painting but his interpretation involves a highly sophisticated digital procedure that entails a three-colour separation process prior to beginning his large-scale oil paintings. This procedure enables him to revisit the subject and present it in such away that the flowers whilst retaining their identity, vacillate between being read as abstract areas of sensuous pure colour before they reconfigure again as flowers. The works are magnified to a cinematic scale, and by editing and altering the subject matter; he produces works that are radically different from the historic portrayal of flowers.

Fig 156 Tim Maguire, *Untitled*, 2011, Oil on canvas, 200 x 149 cm, Private collection.
On completion of his preliminary processes he flicks solvent onto the layers of the wet paint, revealing dots of the colour underneath which operate in much the same way as pointillism did in the C19th. A recent exhibition in 2012 showed the floral images presented over light-boxes, which enhanced their luminosity and moved the genre into a more contemporary context and medium. Tim Maguire’s techniques are complex and interesting and it is easy to get caught up in describing them but ‘...what makes the paintings outstanding and vital: something more difficult to put one’s finger on … is more to do with how we see the paintings than with their technique’ 315.

![Fig 157 Tim Maguire, Untitled, 2011, Oil on canvas, 200 x 149 cm, Private collection.](image)

Normally when Tim Maguire paints, he first applies yellow on a white ground. By doing so he aligns himself, perhaps surprisingly, with Titian and the Renaissance, in a painting such as *Untitled 20030101*, what colour is light? Where is the light source: in the blue sky; in the white ground glimpsed in the holes made by the solvent the artist flicks into each layer; or in the yellow that seems to suffuse the berries and seep through them? In a sense the light source is within them all, though in different ways. So we have an interesting conundrum here: ‘light is white (scientistic); as yellow (instinctual); and as blue (divine) 316’ all three entwined. This is a most effulgent painting, filled with complex light, rich in its radiance.317

315 Ibid., p.14
316 In the Trecento and Byzantine art, this divine light is gold, from Godfrey, T. ‘Light, Skin and Beauty’ in *Tim Maguire*, p. 14.
317 Ibid.
Godfrey describes Maguire’s light as “ideal”, not the light of a landscape but the gold of the haloes of the saints at Ravenna, or the blue of Yves Klein. In Maguire’s *Canal* paintings, as with Barnett Newman’s *Zip* paintings, ‘... light is bodied forth as though it were more substantial than the darkness on either side’ 318.

David Sylvester called *Zip*: ‘... a lightening fastener…a revelation of light… Newman reached beyond the banal to touch the “metaphysical pattern of life’.319 Interestingly the *Canal* paintings marked an ending for Maguire: he lost the desire to make great history paintings and embarked on his flower series. Maguire ‘... recognizes that his flower paintings can be baroque and grotesque, swamped by fleshiness, an overripe eroticism, even morbidity’ 320.

318 Ibid., p. 15.  
320 Ibid., p.28.
In Rose Diptych (fig 160) Maguire has taken a miniscule detail from a Dutch still life painting and made it enormous, in looking at this overblown image the viewer vacillates between beauty and terror; a not dissimilar response to the one generated by Freud and the veinous fleshiness of his vegetation. Maguire’s flower paintings, combined with my interest in van Huysum and Fantin-Latour’s flower paintings ignited my interest in pursuing the flower motif as an entity. I moved from the space of the garden to an intense scrutiny of a single element, the poppy.

Poppies have long been used as a symbol of sleep, peace, and death: sleep because of the opium extracted from them, and death because of the common blood-red colour of the red poppy in particular. In Greek and Roman myths, poppies were used as offerings to the dead. Poppies used as emblems on tombstones symbolize eternal sleep. This symbolism was evoked in the children’s novel The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, in which a magical poppy field threatened to make the protagonists sleep forever.

The symbolism of the poppy, as an object of beauty but also as a reminder of the transience of life, echoed the intentions of Maguire and Freud. In describing his use of the viburnum berry Maguire says,

...it has a strong symbolic quality that corresponds to my earlier interest in *memento mori*. In one bunch you have berries that are spherical and perfect, glistening, shiny, and others that are starting to go bad. Sometimes they're quite black with disease and shrivelled up, and sometimes they become transparent sacks because all the moisture has been sucked out of them. With such botanical subject matter I'm interested in allegorical possibilities arising out of the life cycle, the contrast to perfect beauty with decay, its seductive allure as opposed to something past its use by date. 322

I initially drew an entire bunch of poppies, with the intention of selecting a detail later. I eliminated any view through the window, only adding a slight tonal variation to break up the stark white. Once the drawing was near completion I photocopied it at various ratios and use the copies to experiment with arrangement and placement, (figs 151 & 161).

Fig 161 Graham Marchant, *Poppies*, 2009-10, Graphite on paper, 76 x 56cm, Collection: the Artist.

Window Study 2 (fig 162) was a companion painting to Window Study 1 (fig 151) and both paintings were painted on clay board to enhance the translucency of the paint and assist the glazing process. I increased the scale of the flower heads, and increased the contrast to maximise the chiaroscuro. I used the rigid grid of the window frame to contrast the sensuous stalks and graceful disarray of the poppies. The interior of the room is dark, and unquestionably mournful, the poppies beautiful; they are caught between life and death.
I worked concurrently on *Lawson Street Studio with Poppies* (fig 163), which included a more detailed view of the outside of the window and of the reflections on the windowpane. I found the end result here to be confusing, with too much information creating a rather chaotic picture plane, although I enjoyed the slightly Japanese reference to multiple perspectival platforms.

![Image of *Lawson Street Studio with Poppies*](image)


As a result of this I decided to increase the size of the flower heads and at the same time to introduce a fragment of curtain as I felt it would give some sense of an interior and of human presence (fig 164). The flowers are so much more graceful in their presence than that of the patterned curtain, and so much more alive, that the curtain seems to represent a second death, the pattern is yet another translation of an organic, living form into a static image, sourced from a William Morris fabric. Recalling the *vanitas* the rich fabric indicates taste and sumptuousness but it lacks the translucent life of the poppies.
The glazing procedure for the poppy paintings required some time for drying to occur between layers so consequently I concurrently worked on some much smaller canvases (fig 167).

I was interested in the connection between the painting by Michelangelo Caravaggio (1571-1610) of Basket of Fruit (fig 165) and the Lucian Freud painting of Cyclamen, (fig 166). Both the Caravaggio and the Freud use an eye level that places the arrangement on an elevated shelf. Both paintings dispense with any information about the interior and the Freud even eliminates any information about the receptacle containing the plant. The minimal background in both provides a stark backdrop that emphasises the arrangement. The chiaroscuro is extreme in both paintings with the dark areas occurring predominantly in the leaves. The opacity of the shadow areas in the Freud painting virtually eliminates any detail.
The orchestration of the warm and cool colours in both paintings is beguiling with the cool backgrounds amplifying the warm colours of the arrangement and flowers. In (fig 167), Flower Study 2 consistent with the larger paintings in the series and with both the Caravaggio and the Freud, I wanted to eliminate any surplus information other than the suggestion of the window frame, which I used to balance the composition and to contrast the organic form of the flowers.
In *Flower Study 2* (fig 167) there was a deliberate attempt to emulate the extreme contrast and the warm cool scenario evidenced in *Basket of Fruit*, (fig 165) and *Cyclamen* (fig 166). Rather than concentrate solely on one species of flower as with Freud’s cyclamen or the poppies, I chose a floral mixture knowing that the smaller blooms would require finer brushwork than the somewhat larger poppies. I was also aware of the fact that these smaller blooms would become almost abstract shapes against the sky ‘...pure forms...in which colour and form ‘sing’ in abstract rhythms of interdependence ‘...the forms and colours set up complex relationships independent of their subject matter.’’ 323 Kandinsky formulated a theoretical base for abstract art as the most perfect vessel for a cosmic spirituality: ‘Kandinsky sealed the direction of much modern painting towards a lyrical abstraction born of a clearly held philosophical position that believed in the power of the individual to achieve a spiritual rather than a social revolution in the whole of life’.324.

I agree with Kandinsky in principal but argue that this philosophy can
also be achieved through something closer to realism. In *Poppies by Night by Day* (fig 168) I aimed for an almost x-ray like quality with the intention of even further highlighting the delicacy and fragility of the flowers. The use of a black background echoes that of Fantin –Latour and so many of his predecessors, with the flowers emerging from some dark and varnished place. Interestingly Jan van Huysum (fig 168), so much earlier than Fantin - Latour is credited with introducing a more ethereal light background. In *Poppies by Day* the flowers almost disappear, they seem to be beginning to merge with the background. ‘Attributed to the Flemish painter Jan van Huysum (1682-1749) and proved to be a good excuse for abandoning the traditional dark background against which the usual compositions of flowers or fruit stood out’ 325.

Fig 168 Graham Marchant, *Poppies, by Night, by Day*, 2012, Etching, 49 x 76 cm.

324 Ibid.
It seems appropriate to conclude this paper with a final reference to light as clearly the search for the metaphor of light in realist painting has been instrumental in forming my argument: ‘... that believed in the power of the individual to achieve a spiritual rather than a social revolution in the whole of life ’ 326.

The white ground of the Pre-Raphaelites or Impressionist paintings gives them a different clarity. A white ground allowed Pre-Raphaelite painting to have the brilliance of a miniature, which had always carried the association of a more perfect world. 327 To look at Elizabethan miniatures-with their brilliant light and delicate, miniscule brush marks - is like seeing heaven through a keyhole. And the light in Impressionism (or certainly the popular perception of Impressionism) is associated with happiness or contentment—with an ideal bourgeois life. Light here, as in most paintings, is even and benevolent. J.M.W. Turner, with his terrifying sun, or James Ensor and Edward Munch, in whose paintings light becomes a creeping sickness or contagion, are the exceptions that prove the rule. 328

326 Crumlin, R. Beyond Belief, p. 44.
Conclusion

Milton closes the Twelfth volume of Paradise Lost (1674) with a reference to a garden ‘...in narrow room nature’s whole wealth, yeah more. A heav’n on earth ’ 329.

In some ways this quote encapsulates my intention in writing this paper, I have taken a selective looked at the “narrow room” of the enclosed garden as it has been depicted from medieval times to the C21st. The biblical narratives illustrated in the Illuminated manuscripts gave way to the narratives of the Pre-Raphaelites; narratives inspired by Romanticism, morality and medieval culture; in search of the integrity they felt had since been lost. William Morris formed The Arts and Crafts Movement; he moved away from the Romantic narrative ‘ ...his inspiration ... was both nature and the medieval world. He wanted to find a way out of industrial ugliness, back to the joys of creation.’ 330 The inspiration for his textile designs and prints came from a close observation of nature, he believed, as did the Pre-Raphaelites in truth to nature.

The Impressionists continued this credo and Haussmann’s newly designed Paris with spacious squares linked by broad tree-lined avenues bought nature into an overcrowded city that had been virtually devoid of public and private gardens. These factors both contributed to stimulate an increased awareness of nature, which, coupled with the radical social changes that were happening around the Impressionists ignited an ‘... overall desire to look at the world with a new freshness and immediacy ’.331 The appreciation of gardens as places

331 Ibid.
where communion with the rhythms of nature could occur, for many, replaced the church. Martin Taylor expressed this simply and accurately ‘... faith in an apocalypse of revelation had been replaced by faith in an apocalypse of revolution, and this now gave way to faith in an apocalypse of the imagination’.

Kant’s *Critique of Judgement* (1790) ‘...extended the principle of autonomy from the domains of thought and action to the realm of aesthetic experience and judgement...Kant's imaginative account of beauty suggested a new understanding of religion in which art is the modern expression of religion and religion is undeniably aesthetic’. It is interesting to consider Monet’s work in relation to these ideas; James Elkins in his discussions on Monet questions whether painting may be more like ‘... a religious epiphany than a tiresome scholarly routine.’ Perhaps it is both, it seems that an immersion in process and material can lead to a moment of supreme profound comprehension. Monet’s lifetime of intense observation, according to Spate had led to a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness between all forms of being, a vision of *truth itself*. Two critics, Roger Marx and Louis Gillet, at the time commented on the *Waterlilies* saying that these paintings were referring to the relationship between the self and the external world. ‘He has rendered what only the Japanese have been able to do until now, and which seemed like a lost secret: the intangible, the ungraspable in nature, that is, its soul, its mind and the beating of its heart’.

This quote could equally as well be applied to Freud or Maguire whom I have discussed later in the paper. The common denominator being that all the works, which I have used to support my argument, are realist

332 Taylor, M. ‘Realizing Nothing’ in *Beyond Belief*, p.16.
333 Ibid., p.17.
335 Spate, V. Bromfield, D. *Monet and Japan*, p. 3.
works. They depict nature in detail; they depict growth, decay and rebirth. The compositional strategies and the use of light and shade consistently provide the possibility of some sort of imaginative revelation. Krauss takes the path to abstraction, rather than realism, but she also says that ‘... in the increasingly de-sacralized space of the C19th, art had become a refuge for religious emotion; it became, as it has remained, a secular form of belief.’ 337 Krauss describes the paradoxical nature of the grid as something that ‘... makes us think we are dealing with materialism (or sometimes science or logic) while at the same time it provides us with release into belief.’ 338.

I have chosen to explore the notion of the grid as provider of “release” through its replication as an architecture feature in painting. Koerner describes this in the work of Friedrich which I refer to in Chapter Eight, ‘... the intensely moving sepia …restores an equilibrium between light and shadow, interior and exterior, while also retaining the oil paintings plot about entrapment and release’. 339 In his painting Entrance to a Chamber in the Convent Church of the Holy Cross near Meissen, Friedrich has used doorways to lead the viewer through to the glowingly illuminated exterior.

I have shown many different examples of the use of the domestic architectural grid as a framing device to indicate some other, more infinite space beyond the frame, or in a humbler way to indicate the ebb and flow of nature and changing light conditions. I have described a particular trajectory in this paper focusing always on the possibility of realist art to convey a deep connection a revelation of hidden correspondences. 340

338 Ibid.
I have also looked at *serialism*, as another form of grid which allows the artist by: repeating the same motif exactly in completely different terms… to point to something ‘underneath’ the experience itself: a constancy afterwards perceived but never presently occurring, an enigmatic message from the past that only surfaces in the future, in timeless-because identical-repetitions of the same.341

341 Koerner, J. *Caspar David Friedrich*, p.298.
In conclusion, I hope to have provided a defense for the continuing practice of realist painting of nature as a ‘... visual strategy that culminates in painterly gestures towards … the freedom of art as an autonomous cultural force that is sacralised in its own right ’ 342.

342 Morgan, D. Re-Enchantment, p. 39.
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12. Charles Allston Collins, *Convent Thoughts*, Detail, 1850-1, Oil on canvas, 82.6 x 57.8 cm. Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

13. Charles Allston Collins, *Convent Thoughts*, Detail, 1850-1, Oil on canvas, 82.6 x 57.8 cm, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.


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30. Claude Monet, *The Garden of the Princess*, 1867, Oil on canvas 91 x 62 cm, Oberlin College, Ohio, USA.
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38. Claude Monet, *Boulevard des Capucines*, 1873, Oil on canvas, 80 x 59 cm, 1856, The Nelson Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas, USA.

41. Claude Monet, *Garden at Sainte-Adresse*, 1867, Oil on canvas, 98 x 130 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY.

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**Chapter 5**

47. Eugene Boudin, *The Beach at Trouville*, 1864, Oil on canvas, 26 x 40 cm, Musée d’Orsay, Paris.


51. Claude Monet, *The Pointe de la Hève at Sainte-Adresse, at Low Tide*, 1864, Oil on canvas, 90 x 150 cm, Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, USA.


55. Gustave Courbet, *Seascapes at Trouville*, C. 1865-7, Oil on canvas, various sizes, various locations.
56. Gustave Courbet, *Low tide at Trouville*, 1865, Oil on canvas, 59.6 x 72.6 cm, Walker Art Gallery (Liverpool)
58. Claude Monet, *Haystacks at Chailly, Sunrise*, 1865, Oil on canvas, 30 x60cm, San Diego Museum of Art, USA.
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103. Haussmann's renovation of Paris. en.wikipedia.org

104. Pierre Bonnard, 1913, *The Dining Room in the Country*, Oil on canvas, 63 x 206 cm, The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, USA.


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55. Gustave Courbet, *Seascapes at Trouville*, C. 1865-7, Oil on canvas, various sizes, various locations.

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28. George Elgood, *Borders at Arley Hall*, 1910,
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65. ‘Rouen Cathedral’, Photograph 1885, (Monet owned this photograph).

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90. Charles Marville, Transportation of a Tree, Photograph. 1850,

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