

Eileen Hogan

***Edges and Enclosures***

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**Browse & Darby**

19 Cork Street

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## *Eileen Hogan*

Eileen Hogan never wavered from her determination to be an artist. Growing up as a solitary child in a household with no artistic interests, observing, drawing and painting became her constant companions. Saturday morning art classes run for school children at Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts were the high point of her week. In 1963, in her mid-teens, she enrolled at Camberwell as a full-time student. When she emerged ten years later, after further graduate training at the Royal Academy Schools and the Royal College of Art, she had acquired a discriminating familiarity with the most accomplished figurative artists working in post-war Britain. She had also won their respect and friendship.

Hogan is happy to acknowledge that she has been inspired and influenced by other artists. These include several who taught (by example rather than instruction) at her postgraduate institutions, and some older contemporaries whose work she especially admired. In spring 1997 a pair of concurrent exhibitions, wittily entitled 'Under the Influence' and 'Under the Influence of', demonstrated her allegiances. The former contained work by Hogan which she felt owed something to someone. The latter contained work by the artists who had helped her find her own voice, among them Robert Medley, Richard Eurich, David Jones, Edward Bawden, Gertrude Hermes, Carel Weight, Leonard Rosoman, Roger de Grey, Keith Vaughan and Michael Andrews. Have these artists anything in common, and specifically anything in common which resonates with Hogan's art? The answer is a qualified yes. All are figurative; none is literal; most present their subjects in an abstracted, non-particularised style; most have a slightly quirky

vision; all apply their chosen medium in angular, blocky stains or linear strokes of colour; all eschew thick, textured or splodgy paint as a means of expression; nearly all favour cool colour harmonies; paper is the preferred support of several. When Hogan borrows directly from her chosen mentors, she does so with a hint of impudence: Medley's streamlined bicycles are at home in Tooting Bec and in Greece; Hogan's convivial outdoor lunch paintings (such as *Sophie's Lunch* and *Lunch at the Chelsea Arts Club*) are overt adaptations of indoor and outdoor party scenes by Michael Andrews. However, her fierce independence of mind, eye and spirit has always been more than enough to frustrate any tendency towards pastiche or plagiarism.

Hogan marked out her territory early. Her development as a painter has largely been a matter of becoming ever more accomplished at what she does rather than choosing experimentation for the sake of it. She has never been tempted by pure abstraction, although her love of linear and geometric pattern often enlivens her finished works with wonderful abstract passages of paint. Her fascination with spaces which seem to be open but are – just beyond our field of vision – actually enclosed, began in childhood and continues to this day. Tooting Bec Common, near where she lived, an oasis of green tightly circumscribed by the terraced housing of neighbouring south London streets, was an initial and enduring inspiration. Her art is, and always has been, grounded in her surroundings. She carries a sketchbook and pencil everywhere. She draws as she walks, as she talks, as she sits, as she stands, intently scanning whatever has caught her eye before capturing the image on the open page in her hand. This raw material, filtered through her perceptive memory, is used to create paintings which are never mundane, never routine, always magical.

I first saw pictures by Hogan in 1980 when The Fine Art Society staged an exhibition of her work. Wearing my

official hat, I bought a watercolour, *Diakofto, Greece* for the Government Art Collection. I did not then know that Hogan spent many of her formative years in Greece, including a postgraduate year in 1970-71 as a scholar at the British School of Archeology at Athens. *Diakofto* belongs to a later visit, in 1979. Although not enclosed on all four sides, we guess that the location is a square, probably at siesta time. The scene is devoid of figures but at any moment the two ghost bicycles will be claimed by their owners, people will wake and emerge from their rooms, the chairs by the taverna tables will be filled, the scene will come to life. This modest picture encapsulates so much of Hogan's life-long preoccupations: empty – but never desolate – space; the crucial importance of light, here hot and shimmering, in the central London squares crisp and icy. Equally telling is Hogan's focus on a particular, defining incident which serves to ground a scene. The striped fabric of a chair in *Diakofto*, the bench within an empty snow-covered private square, the number painted on a metal container at Trinity Buoy Wharf beside the Thames, the name and number painted on a beehive at Little Sparta, Ian Hamilton Finlay's garden in Scotland. Each such incident suggests that a human dimension, although unseen, is nearby.

Hogan usually paints outdoor scenes, returning again and again to closely related motifs. The paintings of jackets in her wardrobe are a new addition to her vocabulary. Anyone who knows Hogan knows that she is always a striking presence, and that her marvellous jackets contribute hugely to her individual style and chic. The title *Self-portrait through Wardrobe* is thus exceptionally apposite. At first glance it is a surprise that none of the jackets is striped, because intricate patterns of stripes are a familiar feature of so many of her paintings: slatted blinds and garden chairs, shutters, bamboo screens, fence palings, iron staircases, deck chair fabric. Hogan's stripes are often shadows;



Bench, Edwardes Square, 2014  
oil on paper, 18 x 18 cm

dancing – never ominous – shadows. Light, dappled or dazzling, wan or brilliant, is a crucial component of her outdoor and indoor subjects. In Greece, the blazing sun may be filtered through blinds, or through the slats of taverna chairs. At times, Hogan gives her stripes a vibrant independent life (for example *Regent's Park Zoo* of 1985 and *New York* a decade later), and in so doing approaches most closely to abstraction. To return to her wardrobe, it is possible to view the jackets, hanging vertically, as the raw material for paintings consisting entirely of stripes, stripes which just sidestep abstraction by bearing the imprint of their owner.

Hogan's technique and handling are revealing. She is fastidious and has an innate dislike of the texture of canvas with its ridges and bumps. She occasionally uses panel or board, primarily in smaller paintings, but prefers to paint as well as draw on paper. Paper allows her to achieve an unmodulated texture so that all the nuances of tone and colour, light and shade are under her control. She mixes her media, often using oil and charcoal together and recently experimenting with wax. She has used acrylic (the favoured medium of one of her erstwhile teachers, Leonard Rosoman, in whose former studio she now works) but prefers to paint in oil. She is a consummate watercolourist.

The meticulous character of Hogan's work as a painter is echoed in her work as a letterer. She has herself described lettering as a 'different type of drawing'. It is telling that the example of work by David Jones exhibited in 'Under the Influence of' was not a landscape but an intricately worked sheet of letters, *Cara Wallia Derelicta* (National Library of Wales). But lettering for Hogan is much more than drawing. Letters and numbers often appear in her paintings. They may help to anchor and locate her subject, as in some of her Greek scenes; more often they add a poetic, extra-terrestrial



dimension to her motif. For instance what does the number '1501' on the metal container in *Trinity Buoy Wharf* indicate; are there at least 1500 more such bins; if so where? Hogan's immaculately placed numbers and words urge the imagination to take flight. Who could fail to be entranced by the words 'Bountiful', 'Sweet Promise' and 'Golden Gain' written on Ian Hamilton Finlay's beehives?

Hogan has immense energy and is always ready to push her ideals to their logical conclusion. Thus she took her love of lettering to the next stage and made books. Having been published by The Lion & Unicorn Press, she decided to set up The Burnt Wood Press to publish her own work as illustrator and letterer. In 1983, she established The Camberwell Press. These presses enabled Hogan to draw together design, words and elegant calligraphy and thus fashion exquisite physical objects, many with bindings made by Romilly Saumarez Smith. The Camberwell Press exists, as part of the University of the Arts, to this day. As its Director from 1984 to 1997, Hogan demonstrated that her creative gifts were matched by her talents as an impresario. Although she is no longer making or publishing books herself, artists' books remain a crucial element of her academic work.

The University of the Arts, which now embraces six colleges, including Camberwell, Chelsea, Central St Martins and Wimbledon, is very much a part of Hogan's life. Her role as Professor of Fine Art at Wimbledon is research-orientated. Judging by the thesis titles of some of her current PhD students, she is both a non-conformist and an inspirational supervisor. She is remarkably well-educated in fields outside the visual arts. Literature and theatre are absorbed into her creative work. Her fertile mind, unconstrained by received opinions, encourages her to explore the relationships between different activities. She uses archives to examine myriad

associations between, for example, theatre, artists' books, banking, history and portraiture. The interaction between portraiture and biography transmitted as oral history is of particular interest to her. She paints whilst her sitter is being interviewed and recorded for a life story project. Both lose their self-consciousness, thus establishing a more frank, but less personally intense, relationship than usual in portraiture. In recalling past moments – sad, happy, intimate, mundane, funny – the subject of the interview (Lord Carrington, Anya Sainsbury, Betty Jackson and Paul Ruddock among them) forgets the presence of the painter. The painter meanwhile becomes an objective voyeur, remotely watching and responding to the changing movements, posture and facial expressions of her subject.

Hogan's work as a portrait artist is both varied and extensive. *The Poetry Box* of 2003 is a fascinating example of her sense of invention and fun. What the box comprises is too complicated to describe in the present context (I recommend the catalogue with a foreword by Hogan and an introduction by Andrew Lambirth), but in essence it is derived from a Japanese card game presented as a selection of over 100 poems illustrated by Hogan's portraits of the poets, some living and taken from life (such as Wendy Cope and Moniza Alvi), others dead but brought alive through her imagination (Emily Bronte, W H Davies).

Given Hogan's skill as a painter of faces, it is noteworthy that many of her indoor and outdoor scenes are distinguished by the absence of figures. Such figures as do appear, are often inconsequential and unparticularised presences. They can be so absorbed into a landscape that they read as part of the natural habitat. Her paintings of Ian Hamilton Finlay in his garden illustrate how Hogan manages to integrate figure and setting, whilst yet retaining his distinctive sharp

and cantankerous character. Hogan's remarkable strength as a portraitist is her ability to capture an unmistakable likeness not through the face but through how her subject moves and the postures he or she assumes. Her sitters are as recognisable from the back as from the front.

The present exhibition, although not large, is choice. Besides tasters of two new subjects – jackets in a wardrobe and Trinity Buoy Wharf – it includes two of her most intensely-studied subjects – Little Sparta and private London squares. Little Sparta, in a remote area of Scotland, is lush, green and sometimes peopled. The London squares, although metropolitan, are muffled, still and unpeopled. One senses that Hogan enjoys this paradox, as she enjoys shrouding the normally luxuriant gardens in snow. The squares are especially moving in their purity of style and effect. Hogan's small preparatory studies are touching in their intimacy: a tin watering – can at Little Sparta, a bench in Edwardes Square. For Hogan 'the mind's eye' is not a cliché. In the studio, prompted by drawings and small oil studies made on the spot, she summons memory to recover the distilled essence of her visual experience. The result is paintings of a rare and lingering beauty.

*Wendy Baron, 2015*



*Kettle Drum, 2012, oil on paper, 15 x 15 cm*



Bryanston Square I, 2009  
oil and charcoal on paper, 128 x 127 cm

## *Snow Series*

When I paint places, the impetus is always witnessing a particular light. The scene becomes part of my interior landscape and the memory of it is more important than the primary experience. Sometimes paintings start very fast and others develop over a period of years, as my Snow Series did.

The images are landscapes that I know well, many from the almost daily walk to my studio, which takes me through Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens, Holland Park and Edwardes Square. What I saw was transformed by the suddenness of snow – its whiteness and blanketing silence. Snow is so rare in London that I find the experience dreamlike. I long for the whiteness and the peace but seldom see it, so I remember it, imagine it and paint it.

As well as the complete whiteness of snow I am drawn to the moment when marks begin to appear in the pristine surface. The slow disappearance of snow places great emphasis on the gradual appearance of colour, such as the green or brown edges of patches of grass or earth. The tracks of people or animals that have crossed over it, which reveal an archive of unofficial pathways, map a different sort of reality.

Overleaf: Melting Snow, Kensington Gardens, 2015, detail  
oil and charcoal on paper, 128 x 127 cm









Bryanston Square 2, 2011  
oil and charcoal on paper, 128 x 127 cm



Queen Caroline's Temple, Kensington Gardens, 2014  
oil and charcoal on paper, 128 x 127 cm



## Little Sparta Series

I painted at Little Sparta, Ian Hamilton Finlay's poet's garden in Scotland, between 1997 and 2013. Little Sparta is divided into different sections – gardens within gardens – and, after spending many hours there, I found three places where I worked again and again. These were the Roman Garden (where I painted Ian), the Lochan Eck Garden (where I painted the Goose Hut) and the English Parkland where I painted the trio of beehives Ian had turned into sculpture referencing the sea. I was drawn to the beehives because of the particular sort of space in which they sit, set in a line at the crest of a gently sloping lawn in front of cherry trees. I witnessed them in many different lights; Little Sparta exists in its own microcosm of weather and the changes in light are dramatic. Of particular importance were the moments when a sudden burst of sunlight created dappled shadows on the whiteness of the beehives and the light flickered sometimes like dazzling camouflage. Each of Ian's beehives has painted on it the name of a fishing boat, with its homeport letters and numbers.

Although I've been to Little Sparta often I have never seen the beehives in snow. I almost did in February 2015 but in the end couldn't get there. A friend, Bob Hunter, went to take some photographs for me but discovered that the beehives had been packed away for the winter, so *Imagined Beehives in Snow* is an invention.

Overleaf: *Imagined Beehives in Snow* (work in progress), 2015



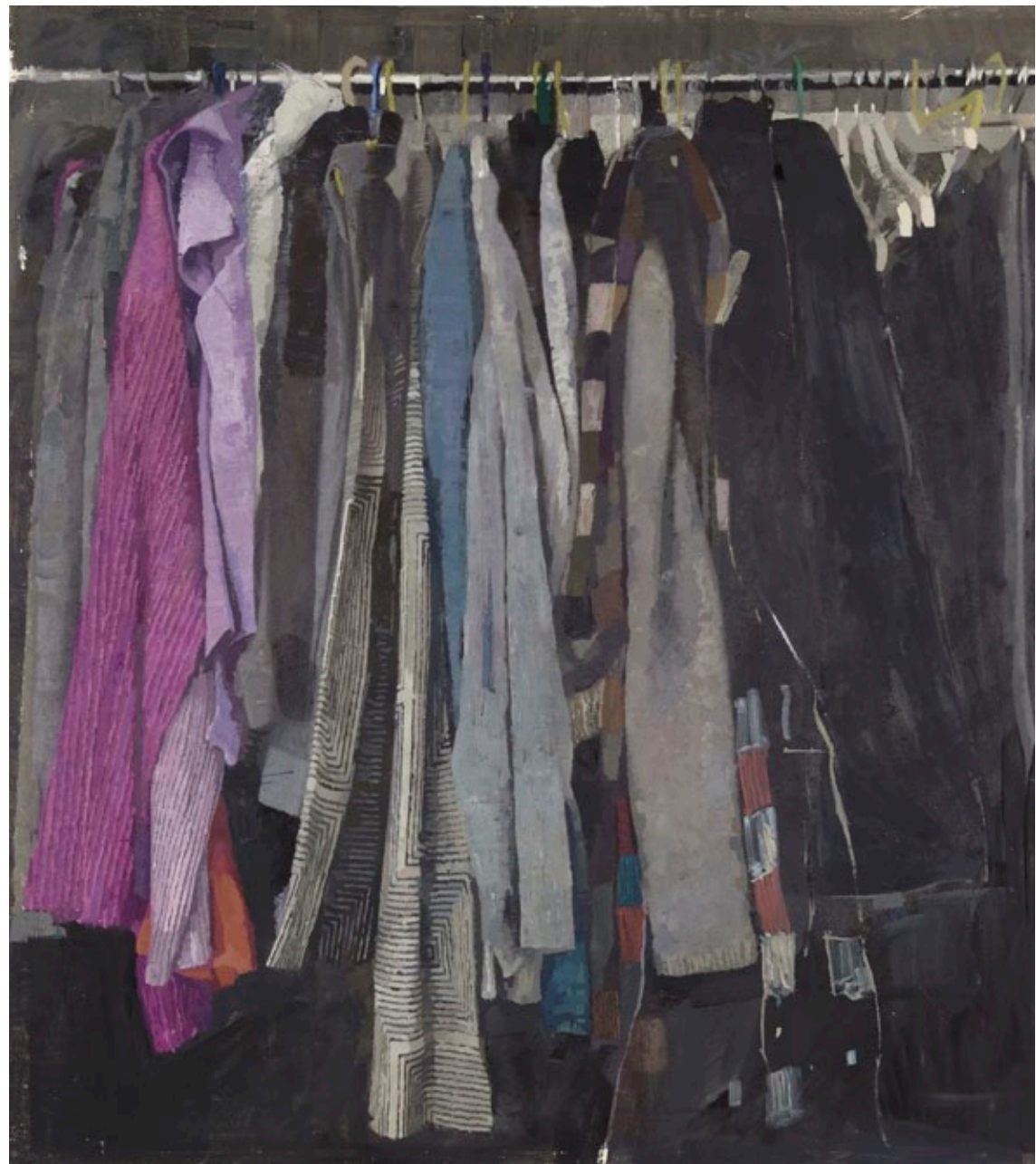






### *Self-portraits through wardrobe*

A familiar feature of my indoor life is the wardrobe at the end of my bed, the closely hung stripes of colour formed by a succession of shirts and scarves. The clothes hold something of my shape, memories of when and where they were bought and of times worn. The paintings are a self-portrait that explores how much presence can be achieved in absence and how much an image of a person can be implied through association.



Self-portrait through wardrobe 2, 2015, oil and wax on paper, 60 x 66 cm





Self-portrait through wardrobe 3, 2015  
oil and wax on paper, 13 x 13 cm



Self-portrait through wardrobe 4, 2015  
oil and wax on paper, 19 x 21 cm



Self-portrait through wardrobe 1, 2014, oil and wax on paper, 60 x 66 cm





Trinity Buoy Wharf I, 2015  
oil and wax on paper, 66 x 66 cm

## *Trinity Buoy Wharf*

Some places have such an unexpected impact on me that they become part of my visual language immediately. Trinity Buoy Wharf was one such place. It is in the borough of Tower Hamlets by the confluence of the river Thames and Bow Creek near Leamouth and was used as a maintenance depot and storage for the many buoys that aided navigation on the river.

My first experience of it was on 12th December 2014. I stood on the Wharf and looked across to the other bank of the river and saw a moored container ship being loaded with grit. Strung across the deck was a washing line on which hung sheets of metal, their rigidity turning them to frozen sails.

The close tones of brown and grey of the low winter light seeped across the river, its edges giving a unity to the semi-derelect/ semi-working atmosphere of the wharf.

*EH, 2015*

Overleaf: Trinity Buoy Wharf 2, detail, 2015  
oil and wax on paper, 56 x 57 cm



1501



## Biographical Notes

Born in London 1946

Camberwell School of Art and Crafts 1963 – 1967

Royal Academy Schools 1967 – 1970

British School of Archaeology at Athens 1970 – 1971

Royal College of Art 1971 – 1974

### Current

Professor in Fine Art: Chelsea, Wimbledon and Camberwell Graduate School, University of the Arts London; Academic Board, Royal Drawing School; Patron and advisor to Mindroom, a charity for children with learning disabilities

### Selected Solo and two-person exhibitions

2015 *Edges and Enclosures*, Browse & Darby, London

2014 *Eileen Hogan at Little Sparta*,  
Stockwood Discovery Centre, Luton Museums

2013 *Vacant Possession*, NewArtCentre, Roche Court, Wiltshire;  
*Eileen Hogan at Little Sparta*, Fleming Collection, London

2010 All England Lawn Tennis Club, Wimbledon

2009 *Romilly Saumarez Smith: bookbindings for Eileen Hogan*,  
Victoria and Albert Museum, London and  
2010 Yale Center for British Art, USA

2008 The Fine Art Society, London, with Leonard Rosoman

2007 *Eileen Hogan's Poetry Box*, San Francisco Center  
for the Book, USA

2006 *Four Squares*, The Fine Art Society, London, also solo  
shows in 1997, 1993, 1988, 1986, 1985, 1982 and 1980

2005 *Portraits, Power and Politics*,  
Buckinghamshire County Museum

2000 The Fine Art Society, London, with  
Margaret MacDonald Casson

### Selected Group exhibitions

2015 *The Last of the Tide, Portraits of D-Day Veterans*,  
The Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace;  
Royal Academy Summer Exhibition also 2013, 2011, 2010,  
2009, 2008, 2007, 2006, 2005, 2004, 2003, 2002, 2001, 2000;  
*Reception, Rupture and Return: The Model and the Life  
Room*, Tate Britain Display

2014 *"Of Green Leaf, Bird, and Flower": Artists' Books and the  
Natural World*, Yale Center for British Art USA (featured  
artist and keynote opening lecture); *BP Portrait Award*,  
National Portrait Gallery, also 2012, 2009 and 2007; *The  
Discerning Eye*, also 2007, 2004, 2003, 2001 and 1990

2006 *Unregulated Printing*, Cambridge University;  
*re:INVENTING: ING Bank and National Maritime  
Museum*

2005 *Recent Acquisitions*, Yale Center for British Art: USA

2004 *The Writer and the Garden*, British Library

2002 *Processes of Renewal*, Toshiba Gallery,  
Victoria & Albert Museum

### Selected commissions and awards

2015 Artist-in-Residence The Garden Museum, London  
Portrait of D-Day Veteran for the Royal Collection

2013 *Masterclass: Life Drawing with Eileen Hogan*, Tate Research

2012 Olympic Artist (tennis); Arts and Humanities Research  
Council Award; *Transforming Artist Books*

2009 Championship Artist 2009: All England Lawn Tennis Club

2005 Muir Trust Artist-in-Residence: Buckinghamshire County  
Museum

2002 Arts and Humanities Research Board Award for *The  
Poetry Box*



### Public Collections

Brigham University Utah, British Library, Buffalo University New York, Cambridge University Library, Esme Fairbairn Trust, Gleeson Library University of San Francisco, Government Art Collection, Graves Art Gallery Sheffield, Greater London Council, Haarlem Stadsbibliotheek, Houghton Library Harvard, Imperial War Museum, Kent County Council, The Library of Congress Washington DC, London Borough of Camden, National Library of Australia, Newberry Library Chicago, Nuffield Foundation, Penguin Art Collection, Rijksmuseum-Meermanno Hague, Sheffield City Art Gallery, Stanford University, Tullie House City Museum Carlisle, Victoria & Albert Museum, University of the Arts London, University of Guildford, University of Tulsa Oklahoma, Wake Forest University North Carolina, Williamson Art Gallery and Museum, Merseyside, Yale Center for British Art.



Self-portrait in Pembroke Studios (work in progress), 2015

oil and charcoal on paper; 102 x 139 cm

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Dar Patrick 2014, page from sketchbook