



Louis Turpin

Onward Journeys:
Gardens and Landscapes

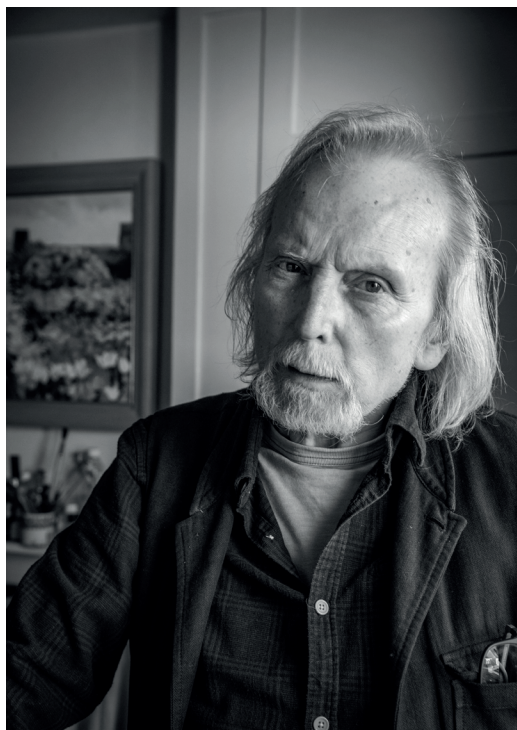
17 February – 17 March 2024





Front
Louis Turpin
Three Cows
oil on canvas
18" x 16"

Louis working
in his studio
Photograph by
John Cole



Black & white portrait
Photograph by John Cole

Louis Turpin

Onward Journeys: Gardens and Landscapes

Foreword

In September 2021, just after the gallery had closed for the day, a quiet but happy looking group gathered outside with some excitement, before being led in to take their places for the main event of the evening. They were not going to a music gig, as they might easily have been some years before but instead to listen to Louis Turpin, the painter, talk about his journey through life, his joy of colour, nature and the process and themes within his painting. It was also a celebration of the new

artworks, dramatic 'Gardens – Landscapes' drawn in one sense from other people's art, such as the gardeners of Great Dixter. In what was his first solo show for more than two years. Louis had attracted a big audience of enthusiasts locally from the Sussex / Kent borders as well as from much further afield.

It had turned out that this particular show had already enjoyed terrific success both in terms of interest and eye watering sales. That evening was also particularly memorable in that many of us were all in a

room together for the first time in a relaxed way, with a glass of wine, (no face coverings) this we had not been able to do for some time. We were enjoying this freedom, following the successive covid enforced government lock downs, when the gallery was forced to close to the public and this kind of gathering was illegal. However, this aside as the evening progressed it also felt like we were all sharing in the candid life stories and work experiences of a close friend. The audience were after all gaining an insight into the practice of a painter who

was much loved and whose work, had been appreciated and enjoyed over many years, taking pride of place, finding their way onto the walls of so many homes. Louis' work is collected throughout the U.K. and he has a large following in the USA.

Always best, I think, not to analyse too much why these events sometimes work so well. Suffice to say on this occasion Louis' passion for painting was certainly equal to the passion the audience showed towards the artist personally as well as his art.



Louis in Rye Art Gallery
with his sister, Emma
Turpin (2022)
Photograph by John Cole

Louis portrait
and working in
his studio
Photographs by
John Cole



Following on from another gap of more than two years and it has to be said, a period of serious illness which prevented Louis from working at all, we are delighted to warmly welcome Louis back on his 'Continuing Journeys into Gardens and Landscapes'. This brand new exhibition at Rye Art Gallery features twenty works, including paintings, ink on paper and drawings, some reflecting on familiar subjects with compositions of exactly arranged colours, where a precise corner of an immaculate

garden like 'Great Dixter' or 'Nymans' have now provided fresh inspiration.

I think it's important to mark a new exhibition with a reference to the past, in particular when it offers up some insight into those defining moments for the artist. In the case of Louis with a career in painting that spans more than 50 Years with Rye and the gallery, there have been many pivotal moments in his journey.

For the purposes of this brief introduction to his work, I have chosen to look back at some of the thoughts, stories, and discussions where Louis has already expressed ideas about process and practice. Referencing just some of these defining moments which have shaped him as the painter that he is today – to add some background meaning to our celebration of this new show.

I wanted to begin with a very Sussex based epiphany in January 1975, in his studio at

Peasmarsh, where he had set himself a task of producing a painting every day for three months. The time each painting took did not really matter, since the exercise was more about a continuing journey. He began with a series of abstract paintings all on paper – and then drawn to the landscape outside the window Louis relates how it was:

I considered the hop garden. The poles make a grid diminishing with perspective and falling away with the fold of the landscape. In the garden there was a group of women with their small children milling around. These women were stringing the poles for the hops to climb around and singing while they worked... 'here we go loop the loop' adapting an old nursery rhyme. I began to draw that scene and the landscape to the top of the field and it was then that I made my first steps to becoming a figurative painter.



Louis in conversation with Davida and Mick Rooney at Rye Art Gallery (2023)
Photograph by John Cole

Louis went on to describe how his work continued to move away from abstraction, at this time his subject matter became the fields around the farm, the hedgerows, poppies on the field perimeters, fields of Brassica. Indeed, only slightly later on his journey into landscape painting, from our permanent collection at Rye Art Gallery, we have a fine large example of this work with, *View from the Studio – Cabbage Field* (1979) (see page 6).



Louis Turpin

Davida with a yellow wall (1986)
oil on canvas

It was during that time that he also began to paint interiors with portraits, Davida his wife was often the chosen model for these, with the viewer drawn in by the carefully arranged patterns of the costumed figure, brilliant colour in a simple, elegant setting.

One more epiphany, it was way back in 1983 when Louis first visited Sissinghurst gardens. Vita Sackville-West's gardeners, Pam and Sybille

were both incredibly still there with no one else around. He describes how these beautiful gardens with their underlying structure, design and colour provided him with a source of inspiration:

The gardens were and of course still are, laid out like external rooms. These rooms, drew me in and I began a series of garden paintings alongside my domestic paintings.

Louis continues to explore landscapes and gardens and they remain the major subject of his work. In fact, paintings of both the magnificent, almost sensual gardens of Great Dixter and Nymans feature in this exhibition. In all his new work, from the garden verges, special clusters of flowers and borders, he adapts and moves around perhaps into the greenhouse (as with *Daturas in the Glasshouse*, see p. 16) where the plants bursting with brilliance become part of a different type of contained interior space.

For this exhibition Louis has included ink drawings with a series of Palms, their beautiful simplicity perfectly complement the intensity of colour in the 'gardenscapes', as does one pencil drawing of the *Peacock Topiary at Great Dixter* (see

back cover), which is my own personal favourite.

A final word – it becomes evident as one gets to know this affable, cultured, engaging man full of stories, that he is also a very disciplined painter, driven by certain core beliefs and values, including a real sense of endless optimism, alongside a belief in the importance of a kind of cultivated order to things. This works in perfect harmony with his ability and skill to transport us into his daring world of vivid colour, with joyful 'gardenscapes' of reimagined spaces with everything in its place, to be discovered anew.

Onwards and upwards – enjoy the show!

Dr Julian E. Day
Curator, Rye Art Gallery
February 2024



Louis Turpin
*View from the Studio -
Cabbage Field (1979)*
oil on canvas
—
Rye Gallery
Permanent Collection



Louis Turpin
Great Dixter, August
oil on canvas
36" x 32"



Louis Turpin
Long Border, Nymans
oil on canvas
15" x 14"



Louis Turpin
View From the Studio
oil on canvas
18" x 20"



Louis Turpin
Reed Beds at Pett Level
oil on canvas
36" x 18"



Louis Turpin
Fire Lilies at Great Dixter
oil on canvas
18" x 18"



Louis Turpin
The Old Pear Tree
oil on canvas
16" x 18"



Louis Turpin
Pink and Yellow
oil on canvas
14" x 13"

Louis Turpin
The Long Border, September
oil on canvas
20" x 18"





Louis Turpin
The Cottage Garden
oil on canvas
13" x 12"



Louis Turpin
Daturas in the Glasshouse
oil on canvas
18" x 16"



Louis Turpin
The Long Border II
oil on canvas
18" x 16"



Louis Turpin
The Magnolia Tree
ink and brush drawing on paper
18" x 18"



Louis Turpin

Palm I

ink on paper

8" x 11.5"



Louis Turpin

Palm II

ink on paper

8" x 11.5"



Louis Turpin
Palm III
ink on paper
8" x 11.5"



Louis Turpin
Palm IV
ink on paper
8" x 11.5"



Louis Turpin
Palm V
ink on paper
8" x 11.5"

Right

Louis Turpin

Peacock Topiary

pencil on paper

8" x 11.5"

Rye Art Gallery
107 High St
Rye, East Sussex
TN31 7JE

OPEN

Mon to Sat 11-5

Sun 11-4

Closed all day Tuesday

01797 222 433

ryeartgallery@gmail.com

ryeartgallery.co.uk

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