



First published in 2026 by

CEEH
Centro de Estudios
Europa Hispánica



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ISBN: 978-84-18760-98-3

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Edited by
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Design by
The Burlington Magazine Publications Ltd
hall@burlington.org.uk

Printed and bound by
Gomer Press Ltd

Cover
To the Memory of David Davies (detail of cat. 116), 2024

Back cover

Left to right: *I Will Go to Sevilla for Semana Santa* (detail of cat. 6), 2006; *San Juanito* (cat. 120), 2010; *The Impossible Challenge of Zurbarán* (cat. 12), 2024; *Studio in Ladbroke Grove* (detail of cat. 19), 2005; *Boys Climbing a Tree* (cat. 29), 1992; *Tadós Arias de Enriquez* (cat. 33), 2005; *Girl* (cat. 162), 2009; *Back to Spain* (detail of cat. 39), 1985; *A Goya* (detail of cat. 31), 1997



Printed on

PPC: 135gm Colorplan Bright White with diapple emboss (FSC MIX)
Endpapers: 120gm Wiltain® Natural, was507 Old Gold (FSC MIX)
Text: 150gm Magno Volume (FSC MIX)

To the late

EDWARD GRETTON

'Ed was just as keen as I was to board an overnight bus to Barcelona'



Detail of
Towards Algeciras, 2000

PLATES by Susan Wilson

Introduction

TE WAIPOUNAMU

I grew up in the 1950s in New Zealand's South Island, then remote, isolated and thinly populated. We lived in a valley beyond a small pass called the Weka Pass, and behind our house, the Manse, rolling hills led to a huge rock overhang where Māori hunter-gatherers had sheltered and drawn images of strange mythical creatures, lizard-like, a long series of interesting and curious art which as a child I loved to go and see. This was among the first art I saw. To reach the cave you walked up sheep tracks amidst strange and marvellous wind, that covered the soft rounded hillsides. The remains of Moa, giant emu-like flightless birds, were being dug up nearby at a large excavation in Pyramid Valley, where the hills covered in tawny grass did look like pyramids.

I was at school with Māori. Our headmaster of Waikari Primary School was an Ulsterman and taught us Māori culture, songs and dance. We lived in alpine foothills: the snow-covered Southern Alps were at the end of our lovely valley. The walk back from school faced the mountains. This created in me a love of the altiplano, the high country. Local sheep farmers traded with South America. A cousin bred a sheep, the Corriedale, which he exported to Uruguay and Argentina. Friends had a grandfather who farmed in Argentina and called his house 'Campana'

when he returned to Canterbury. Spanish speakers came to the area to buy livestock.

Cowboys, called musterers, were part of this culture. They took sheep up to high alpine pasture each summer, bringing them down in autumn. They used a horse and dogs, and would sleep out under a cover next to the horse if they couldn't make it to remote alpine huts. Part of my father's job as a minister was to visit high country sheep stations, huge grand houses often with Chinese-style gardens, tennis courts, an abandoned swimming pool – even at one, fifty rooms, as well as outbuildings for cooks, shearers and musterers. We kids could run wild all day in the gardens while our parents talked and ate cake and drank tea. At one place you had to ride in a flying fox, a box on a wire, to cross the river to get to the homestead. My old sheep breeder cousin lived on an island and would drive a small 4x4 across a large river bed to his house in his eighties – my children and my husband were astonished. He didn't care about being cut off by floodwaters in the spring snow melts.

My father, a horseman who drove teams of Clydesdales to plough fields as a young man and bought horses at Christchurch fairs, had seen warfare. In the Second World War he served with the New Zealand Medical Corps through the Italian Campaign alongside creatives who, like him, felt they would not be able to kill. Poets,



Detail of

The Spanish Civil War, 2011

Still Life

DURING MY STUDIES AT Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts in the late 1970s and early 1980s, I began to construct still life paintings after each trip back to Spain. These were trips where my husband Ed and I would explore Barcelona, sitting in cafés and bars that don't seem to exist anymore; go to Granada on a long slow night train; spend hours in the Prado; and years later, drive slowly across the Meseta plateau to Guadalupe from the Pyrenées, via a campsite at Roncesvalles. Other journeys took us to explore small Andalusian towns and mountain valleys.

The still lifes I made on my return were small installations of things we had found on our travels, and in Portobello Road's shops and stalls near where I live in London. These evolved into larger assemblages of collected objects and images where I could give free rein to my enjoyment of travels with Ed and feel like I was actually back in Spain. We collected postcards, maps and ephemera, a napkin from La Mallorquina, a cake shop on Puerta del Sol in Madrid (I'm sure the painter Juan Gris was in there eating and drinking long before me – his

still life images echo the yellow curtains and wooden tables). Grease-proof wrapping paper would appear in my paintings – this from Toledo (cat. 20). I included bottles with beautiful labels from Spain, as well as Spanish jugs from the Monastery of Leyre where the monks make and decorate them (cat. 25, 26, 51); their flat, wide base and shape remind me of the Infanta's dresses in paintings by Velázquez.

I wanted these assemblages to be very personal paintings driven by a sense of place. Once my children were born I could set them up and get back to them easily, working at night. I wrote on them often – I still do. I wrote 'Io Vivo' on one (cat. 14) after a long difficult illness during the pandemic. I celebrated being back at the easel and included images of Naples, where we had been searching for traces of Spanish architecture and culture.

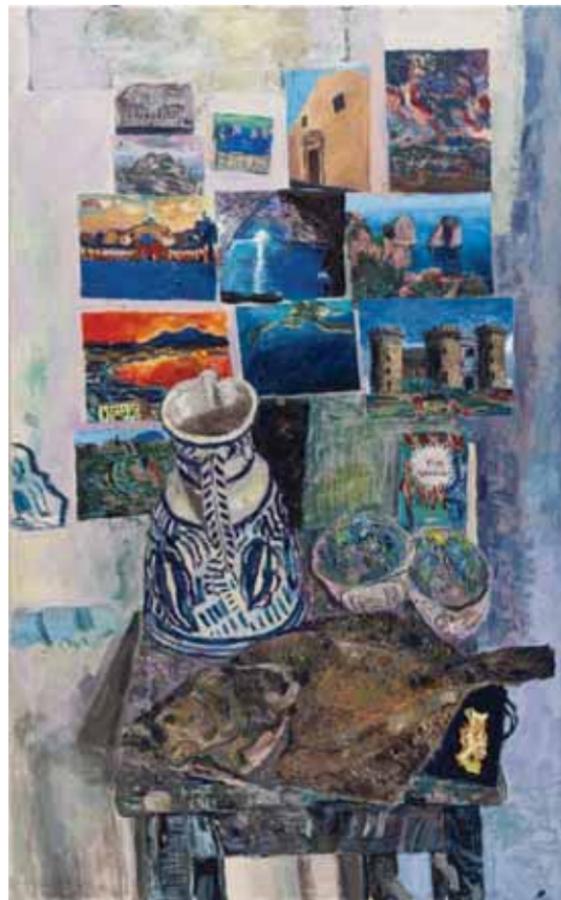
On Portobello Road, I could find in the two Spanish shops chorizo, Manchego cheese, wine and galletas to inspire and refresh my instincts for each picture. I wanted to capture the mood of



6
I Will Go to Sevilla for Semana Santa, 2006
Watercolour on paper
6 3/4 × 16 3/8 in (15.9 × 41.9 cm)



7
Lemons Grown by Wilson, 2021
Oil on board
6 × 10 in (15.2 × 25.4 cm)



8
Naples Painting, 2024
Oil on linen
42 × 26 in (106.7 × 66 cm)

My mother bought me a book each Christmas, usually one which had won an award. These included *The Island of the Blue Dolphins* by Scott O'Dell, based on a true story, about a girl who watched her tribe being killed by Aleut sealers on the island of Santa Catalina, just off the coast of California. She hid with her dog Rontu-Aru and lived alone for 18 years until missionaries found her and took her to the Santa Barbara Mission, where she is buried. I was very moved to see her tomb. The small green book is about her life. O'Dell describes her daily existence movingly. It was the perfect book for me at that time, as we had left the South Island of New Zealand and moved to a seaside town near Auckland which I did not like. The culture then was incomprehensible, brash and shallow. Only the art class was my place. I wanted to get back to the Waikari Hills.

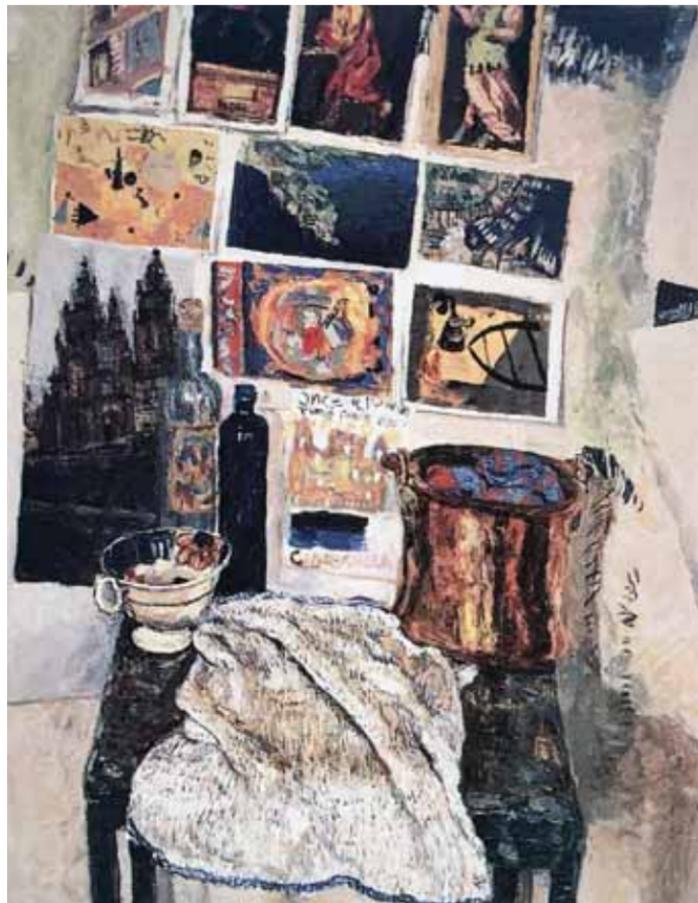


15
Santa Barbara Mission, California, 2009
Oil on linen
20 × 24 in (50.8 × 61 cm)



34
Model in a Crown and Angel, both 2010
Angel after Bartolomé Román,
 Monasterio de las Descalzas Reales, Madrid
 Pencil and Biro on paper; Biro and gel pen on paper
 Each 10 × 7½ in (25.4 × 19.1 cm)

35
Once upon a Time, 1998
 Oil on linen, 36 × 28 in (91.4 × 71.3 cm)
 Private Collection, UK



This is an image of the tragedy of civil war. Goya understood the reprisals, the heroism, the extreme cruelty of warfare. In many ways the war in Italy that my father saw and experienced was a civil war. Mountain people sheltered and fed Allied escapees and evaders, and after the war many grateful soldiers went back to find their protectors and thank them. The Italians took a huge risk in doing so and were often shot by the advancing German Army if word got out that villagers had provided help.

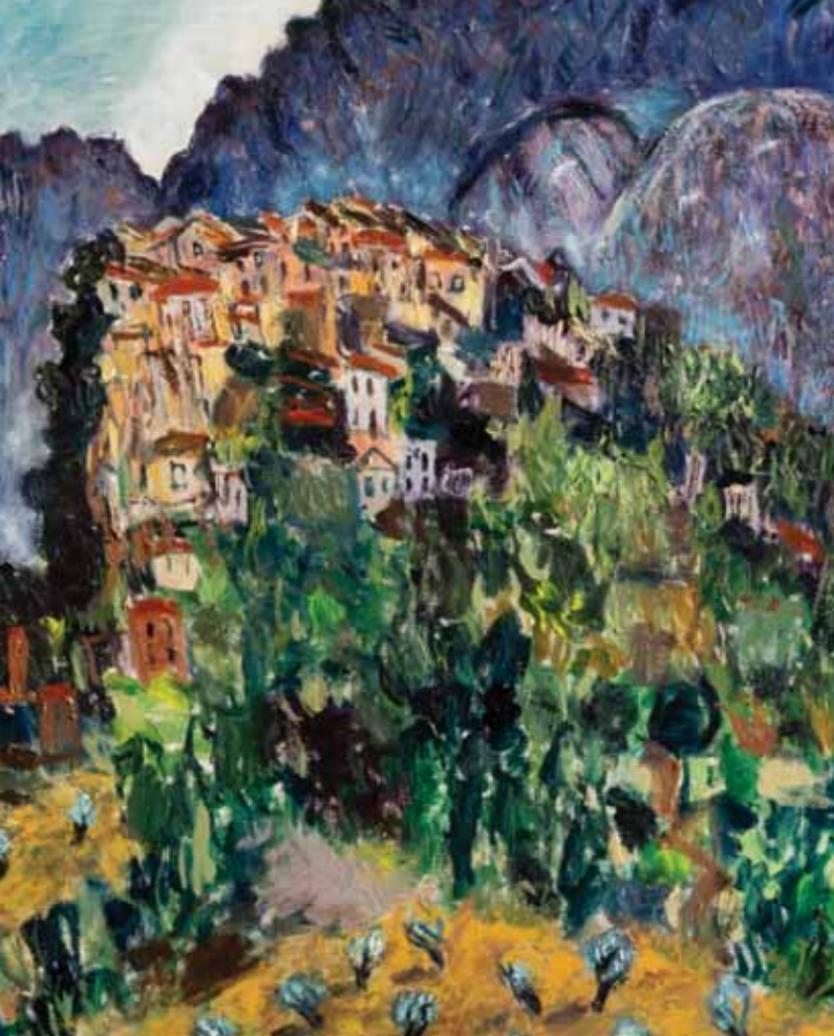


46
Saturn Devouring his Son, 1795
After Francisco de Goya, Museo del Prado, Madrid
Pencil on paper, 10 × 8 in (25.4 × 20.3 cm)



47
See Naples and ..., 2004
Oil on linen, 36 × 28 in (91.5 × 71.2 cm)
Private Collection, Courtesy Flowers Gallery





Detail of
Cassino Lies Ahead, 2000

Landscape

CAMBERWELL SCHOOL OF ART taught me to take a sketchbook and draw wherever I went. Dick Lee, who ran the Foundation course, made a little found object piece, which is now up on the wall in my kitchen, that says 'Take Your Paints'. That's not always possible and so I take a tiny watercolour box and coloured pencils with me.

Change is a part of observational drawing. Everything you might draw can change, be pulled down, fall down, be rebuilt. Much of Spain has changed.

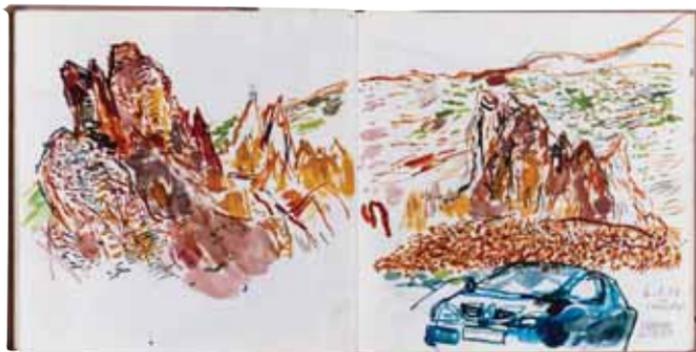
Each time I've gone back to Spain, I've made drawings on the move, in cars speeding down the motorway where all changes as you go, such as travelling from Bilbao to Lerma (cat. 80). With my husband Ed at the wheel, I drew the landscape approaching Sos del Rey Católico (cat. 98) and the view on the N-601 motorway to Valladolid in pencil (cat. 99). On the train I used sepia ink, between Badajoz and Madrid, for example (cat. 106). Then, quietly, I've drawn in places like the Sabatini Gardens in Madrid (cat. 78), or the Parador in Toledo (cat. 113, 118), a place the art historian David Davies urged me to stay at, as he believed El Greco's views overlooking the city were often taken

from this site. Recently I made watercolours of the deliciously green clear waters of the sea at Aiguablava, on the coast near Begur, Catalonia (cat. 86, 87, 88, 89).

As a child I used to sit behind my primary school on a hill and draw the Seaward Kaikōura mountain range. I have always minutely observed landscape. My parents instilled in my brothers and me how to recognise terrain, as we were allowed to roam in the mountain foothills together with friends and needed to learn early on how to be home before dusk.

When I studied at the Royal Academy Schools in London, I overheard a tutor, Jane Dowling, saying we should try to draw from memory. So, I do. She pointed out that while it can simplify an image, you can capture what you want more directly.

When you draw from observation, you sharpen your perception and notice so much more. I'm sure that in that process we use a different part of the brain compared with only looking. Hand and brain combine and all opens out. Given climate change, this kind of slow, scrutinising observational drawing of landscape is now a radical act.



96
Tenerife in Canyon Lands, 2006
Watercolour on paper
7 3/4 x 15 1/2 in (19.7 x 39.4 cm)



97
Mainarde Mountains from San Vincenzo, 1995
Oil on linen
29 x 20 in (73.7 x 50.8 cm)



110
El Botánico, Sanlúcar de Barrameda I, 2012
Pen and pencil on paper
8¼ × 23 in (21 × 58.4 cm)



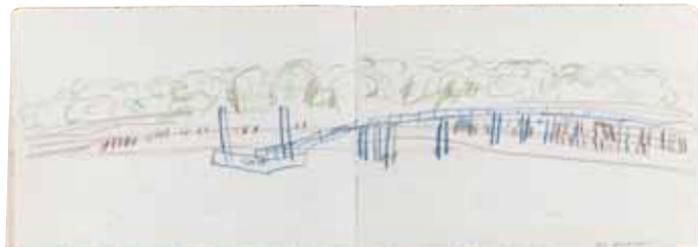
111
El Botánico, Sanlúcar de Barrameda II, 2012
Sepia Ink on paper
8¼ × 23 in (21 × 58.4 cm)

SKETCHBOOK NOTES

Sanlúcar is a shipping goods, port kind of place. Men, women would go to the New World. Nuns and monks waited in the town for six months for ships to return.

During the day we had seen Nuestra Señora de La O with its Mudéjar ceiling. A *Holy Family on a Flight to Egypt* is sweet and flowery, which made me think this style had crossed the Atlantic and made its way to become the Cusco School. In the Buen Viaje Church where you would pray before you embarked, Mary holds a silver boat. A lovely little Buena Pastora polychrome wood sculpture is seated wearing sheepskin surrounded by sheep in a glade. She sits on black rocks and wears a starry crown.

At night children play in the plaza amidst bougainvillea palm trees and lovely tapas bars until midnight, skipping about letting off tiny crackers. Frail old women are brought out into the plaza. It's civilised, kindly and fun.



112
Sanlúcar, the Guadalquivir, 2012
Pencil on paper
8¼ × 23 in (21 × 58.4 cm)





Detail of
Matthew Dressed as a King,
2010

Portraiture

IN MY CLASS 'THE BODY CLOTHED' at the Royal Drawing School, I would read texts to the students each session, contextualising the dress and acknowledging other cultural histories. Sometimes I would read a whole chapter of a novel to the class – Cervantes' *Don Quixote* and its description of posh women dressed as shepherdesses comes to mind.

I had several conversations with Paula Rego in her studio and saw her collection of costumes hanging on a rail. I was influenced by her but did not want to copy how she worked. I knew she went often to the Prado in Madrid, and loved Ribera. She helped me to be very experimental and to create some wild costumes which, with my models collaborating and enjoying different roles, worked.

So there are drawings of Matthew as a king (cat. 134) and a soldier (cat. 132); there are models dressed as an angel (cat. 137, 138); then I dress myself as an angel for a self-portrait (cat. 140). I found wings in the street nearby, and I recycled plastic cutlery for a very uncomfortable crown. Some Cook Islands women, who had come

to Europe to visit soldiers' graves in Northern France, sold me a woven floral headdress at an event held to commemorate their visit. This appears in *Ukrainian Woman with Wealth* (cat. 122). Here the sitter said that, in summer, she and other villagers would wear a similar crown of fresh flowers. Carmen, who I had seated in a portrait in front of woven wool I bought in the Andes as a backpacker (cat. 127), gave me as a gift, for my classes, a full carnival dress from her home town of Cochabamba in Bolivia (cat. 133).

Living by Portobello Road, I go to browse amidst the clutter and texture of the clothing rails under the Westway flyover. Jimi Hendrix bought his famous blue military jacket on this road and periodically these appear. They are cut and made well, of good quality, thick felted wool, and to draw or paint them is inspiring (cat. 135, 136).

The paintings I love are almost always of clothed figures. Spanish painting is the richest source. There are farthingales and ruff collars; big, rigid, heavily embroidered Habsburg dresses in works by Velázquez (see his drawings of the Spanish princesses) as well as armour: military

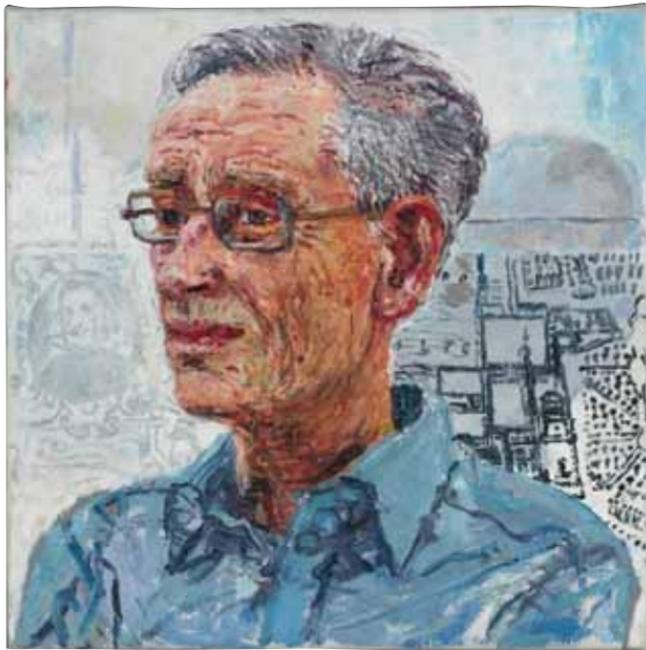


121
Queen Mariana of Austria, 2013
After Diego Velázquez, Museo del Prado, Madrid
Biro on paper, 11¾ × 6 in (29.8 × 15.2 cm)



122
**Ukrainian Woman
with Wreath, 2024**
Oil on linen
50 × 30 in (127 × 76.2 cm)

Sir John Elliott (1930-2022) was Honorary President of ARTES, a charity dedicated to raising awareness of Iberian and Latin American art. I painted this small work in his house where he and his wife Oonah made me very welcome. He wrote on Spain and when I was ill in 2021 I took his book *Imperial Spain* with me to read in hospital, the perfect distracting, engaging read.



164
Sir John Elliott, Regius Professor of Modern History 1990-97, 2010
Oil on linen, 12 x 12 in (30.5 x 30.5 cm)
Oriel College, Oxford

Nigel Glendinning (1929-2013) was one of the founders of ARTES. He wrote the first great synthesis of the reception of Goya as an artist. He tirelessly researched the painter throughout his life, increasing awareness and understanding of Goya and, in turn, Hispanic art and culture. To stand with him on the bridge on Calle Bailén in Madrid, where he pointed out to my husband Ed the site of the Quinta del Sordo - Goya's house, where the painter made the 'Black Paintings' on its walls, after an illness leading to deafness - was a great moment.



165
Nigel Glendinning, 2019
Etching
6½ x 5½ in (16.5 x 12.7 cm)

Whilst Chair of Hispanic Studies at Southampton University he organised contemporary painting exhibitions. To the end of his life he had a deep interest in the malleability and fluidity of paint, in its loose handling and subtlety at its most rich. He did not want to deattribute Goya's *The Colossus* and gave a moving presentation as to why not in an ARTES meeting at the V&A. Such argument (debate) can only enrich our knowledge.

Nigel and Sir John Elliott (cat. 164) both received in their lifetimes numerous awards and prizes from the Hispanic world, too numerous to list here. Nigel was described in *The Guardian* as 'the kindest and most generous of colleagues'. Certainly this was the welcoming, generous man we knew at ARTES.

