



WADDESDON
Rothschild Collections



Brought to Life: Eliot Hodgkin Rediscovered

25 May – 20 October 2019

Coach House Gallery, Waddesdon Manor

***Brought to Life: Eliot Hodgkin Rediscovered* (25 May – 20 October 2019) is the first major exhibition of the artist's work in nearly thirty years, and aims to return this remarkable British painter to the spotlight where he belongs.**

By his death in 1987, Hodgkin (born 1905) was not only a renowned painter of still life subjects and landscapes, but also a collector and the author of a well-received novel. Waddesdon's retrospective brings together the largest ever exhibition of Hodgkin's paintings and drawings – nearly 100 – many of which have never been seen in public before.

It also assembles a small group of works by other artists that inspired him, and a number of the objects kept by his family which appear in the paintings.

Hodgkin mainly worked in oils and egg tempera, a technique that he revived and used to create masterly depictions of everyday objects, such as lemons, radishes, dead leaves and feathers, rendering them with almost uncanny accuracy. Many of his paintings were in the tradition of Dutch and Spanish still life, in the manner of Adriaen Coorte and Sanchez Cotan whom he greatly admired. Writing to his friend, Sir Brinsley Ford, Hodgkin stated: "*I like to show the beauty of things that no one looks at twice.*"

Coorte's 1703 painting *Asparagus Bundle*, which can be closely compared with Hodgkin's *Four Asparagus* (1961, The Ramsbury Manor Foundation) is coming to Waddesdon from the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge. Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot's *Bouquet of Flowers in a Vase next to a Pot of Tobacco* (Private Collection) reveals the French painter's influence on Hodgkin's own preoccupation with flowers, as can be seen in pieces such as *Maxie's Poppies* (1948, The Hodgkin Family Collection), *Violets* (1956, Private Collection), *Three Pink Tulips (Fantasy)* (1957, Private Collection) and *Iceland Poppies No. 1* (1970, Private Collection).

Hodgkin's art is greatly prized by collectors – many of his works are still with the families of the original owners, which means that a large proportion of the exhibition comes from private collections, never usually on public display. There is also a Waddesdon connection through Lord Rothschild, who has long been a devotee of his work.



Another significant holding of the artist's work is to be found at Ramsbury Manor in Wiltshire, home to the collection put together by Harry Hyams and now held in a philanthropic trust. Part of the exhibition will be devoted to an introduction to the history of this extraordinary, but very little-known, house.

Legendary art critic Brian Sewell recalled in his memoir that he first encountered Hodgkin's work while strolling along Bond Street on his way to Christie's – where he then worked. In the window of a furniture shop was a small painting called *Mrs. Riley's Milkweed*. Arrested by the sight of 'this strange little painting of dry stalks, dead leaves and bursting seed pods', he bought it and treasured it until his death in 2015. Waddesdon is delighted that the picture will feature in the exhibition.

Sewell had recognised something fundamental to Hodgkin's work. Responding to an enquiry from *The Studio* magazine in 1957, Hodgkin provided a brief description of his interest in still life painting: "*In so far as I have any conscious purpose, it is to show the beauty of natural objects which are normally thought uninteresting or even unattractive: such things as Brussels sprouts, turnips, onions, pebbles and flints, bulbs, dead leaves, bleached vertebrae, an old boot cast up by the tide. People sometimes tell me that they had never really 'seen' something before I painted it, and I should like to believe this... For myself, if I must put it into words, I try to look at quite simple things as though I were seeing them for the first time and as though no one had ever painted them before.*"

Brought to Life: Eliot Hodgkin Rediscovered surveys key areas of the artist's career including: his early works such as *October* (1935, Tate), *Cow Parsley* (1935, Private Collection) and *Two White Peonies* (1939, The Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth House); still life studies including *Quince* (1941), *Nine Strawberries* (1955) and *Lemons in a Paper Bag* (1965) – all private collections; and landscapes and vistas such as *Bridge at Chiswick Park* (1949, Private Collection) and *Landscape at Villars-sur-Ollon* (1954, The Hodgkin Family Collection) and *View of San Francisco* (1965, The Hodgkin Family Collection).

A particular highlight of the exhibition will undoubtedly be a series of twelve intensely arranged fruit and flower compositions dating from 1950/1 – *The Months* – each representing a month of the year from January to December. These were the centrepiece of Harry Hyam's collection at Ramsbury Manor and have not been publicly displayed for decades.

The exhibition also includes a selection of objects used by Hodgkin as props or subjects for his paintings. These include the oil can used for *British Railway Oil Cans* (1966, Private Collection), ceramics, baskets, feathers, seed cases and snail shells. There are also objects used by the artist himself, including his apron, paintbrushes and a register listing his tempera paintings and who commissioned them.

A hunt is currently underway to trace Hodgkin's work – mostly London views - made during the Second World War, whose whereabouts are now unknown. Hodgkin's grandson Mark – who along with his brother Mathew and art historian Adrian Eeles are currently coordinating a catalogue raisonné of Hodgkin's work – explains. "*During the war he produced a number of landscapes of London bomb sites with St Paul's in the background, plus other works of famous landmarks such as Hampton Court, the Houses of Parliament and the Tower of London – but we have no idea where any of them now are. We've exhausted our resources in terms of finding these paintings and so now we need help to find them.*"



Pippa Shirley, Head of Collections at Waddesdon Manor, says “We are very proud to be working on this exhibition with the Hodgkin family and Adrian Eeles, shining a well overdue light on a British artist who deserves to be far more widely celebrated. He is best known as a painter of still life subjects, but less well known are his haunting views of bomb-sites in London after World War II, with rank weeds and wildflowers pushing up through mounds of rubble. We hope this exhibition will surprise and delight those who don’t know his work, capturing as it will the full range of his work, and other facets of his career as an artist, which have never been fully explored.”

The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue that features a forward by Neil MacGregor.

Brought to Life: Eliot Hodgkin Rediscovered

Open 11am-5pm, Wed-Sun, 25 May - 20 October 2019

Free with grounds admission: Adult £11, Child £5.50, Family £27.50

Free for National Trust, RHS and Art Fund members and Under-5s

Events

Thursday 6 June, 1.15pm and Saturday 14 September, 1.15pm, curator-led, free exhibition tours. Advance booking is recommended www.waddesdon.org.uk/whats-on

Wednesday 19 June, 6pm doors for 6.30pm *Curator in conversation* – Exhibition curator Adrian Eeles in conversation with Eliot Hodgkin’s son Max Hodgkin, Charlotte Gere, art collector and friend, at Spencer House, St James’s Place, London SW1A 1NR. Tickets £14 include a glass of wine and an opportunity to see the State Rooms. Bookings 020 7514 1958 or [online here](#).

NOTES FOR EDITORS

Waddesdon Manor was built at the end of the 19th century by Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild in the style of a French early 16th-century château. Baron Ferdinand was an inspired collector and the house was designed to showcase his exceptional collection of French 18th-century furniture, Sèvres porcelain, English portraits and other decorative arts. When Ferdinand died in 1898 he left Waddesdon to his sister, Alice. Upon her death the house passed to her great-nephew, James de Rothschild, who inherited a substantial part of his father Baron Edmond’s great collection. In 1957, in order to ensure its future in perpetuity, Waddesdon was bequeathed to the National Trust. The Rothschild family continues to run Waddesdon through a family charitable trust under the chairmanship of Lord Rothschild. More at www.waddesdon.org.uk/about-us/press/notes-for-editors/. For more information on Waddesdon Manor and its exhibitions, visit www.waddesdon.org.uk, like WaddesdonManor on Facebook, follow @WaddesdonManor on Twitter and waddesdonmanor_nt on Instagram.

More information on the Eliot Hodgkin can be found at www.eliothodgkin.com. If you have information about the missing works, please get in touch with contact@eliothodgkin.com

IMAGES - High resolution images for press use can be downloaded here

The Months, March, Eliot Hodgkin. © The Ramsbury Foundation, photo by AJ Photography

One Lemon Quartered, Eliot Hodgkin, 1972 © The Estate of Eliot Hodgkin

Mrs Riley’s Milkweed, Eliot Hodgkin, 1937. © Private Collection

View of San Francesco, Eliot Hodgkin, 1965. © The Estate of Eliot Hodgkin

Auricula, Eliot Hodgkin, 1955. © Waddesdon (Rothschild Family)

Nine Strawberries, Eliot Hodgkin, 1955. © Private Collection

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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