

64
Giant Hogweed, date unknown
Pen and ink
Dimensions unknown
Credit: The Artist



65 (opposite)
Hellebores, 1996
Oil on canvas
Dimensions unknown
Credit: The Artist



66 (left)
Durham Wharf, 1955
Pencil
12.8 x 25.9 cm (5 x 9 in)
Credit: The Artist



72 (opposite)
The Black Bottle by Moonlight, 2006
 Oil on canvas
 60 x 50 cm (23⁵/₈ x 19⁵/₈ in)
 Private collection



73 (right)
Mary and Julian, 1995
 Gouache
 40.6 x 44.5 cm 16 x 17¹/₂ in
 Credit: Sotheby's Picture Library

What is undeniable, all the same, is that without Julian's daily input, Fedden's art would have developed quite differently. Her frequently spoken gratitude to him is not typical modesty. His advent was without doubt a new beginning for her. She perhaps got from him artistically, something that the Slade teachers (with the exception of Polunin) had failed to provide: he pushed her to find her originality.

Mary and Julian lived, worked, and travelled together for very nearly 40 years (Ill. 73). By any standard, it was a successful marriage ... of equals. Tellingly, she records that she would eventually offer criticism of his paintings, the way he had for her in their early days. It was an echo. She would tell him to take out his favourite passage in a painting he was working on; he would refuse and whine: 'That's my favourite part!' But she noticed that he always quietly removed that part later on when she wasn't looking.



76
Picnic at Glyndebourne, 1990
 Oil on board
 51.5 x 61 cm (20¼ x 24 in)
 Private collection



79
Two Lemons, 1999
 Collage and gouache
 18.5 x 20.2 cm (7¼ x 8 in)
 Private collection



77
Jenufa, 1992
 Collage and gouache
 46 x 56 cm (18⅞ x 22 in)
 Private collection

while she has moved next door into his. It's larger and airier, and she fills it with her paintings continually.

His press is still used by visiting printmakers, one of whom is gradually completing the editions of Trevelyan's prints, since most were never printed to the full edition in his lifetime. There are always cast-offs from the printing process and Fedden uses them in her collages (Ill. 79). His images of bridges, chimneys, architecture and urban places, his visual wit and the playfulness of his etching needle, still form part of her art just as these things had contributed to their shared interests during their lives together. Mary's collages that incorporate bits of Julian's etchings are, in their own light-hearted way, similar to what Picasso did to the Old Masters, to Velázquez or Delacroix – deconstructing and then reconstructing them on his own terms. In Fedden's case there is a cheeky humour involved,

as well as an appreciative homage paid to Trevelyan's work.

Since finding herself alone, Fedden's liberal production of paintings, finished drawings and collages has, if anything, increased. This has coincided with her rise in popularity and, consequently, the prices for her work. However, the relish expressed by her collectors makes it hard to believe that cynical speculation is their sole motive. Perhaps her very profuseness has helped bring on this wave of popularity – or maybe it's the other way round.

Either way, the misfortune of having to continue without Trevelyan may have paradoxically acted as an incentive to work. To that degree, the years since 1988, like the years after 1949 when she started to live with Trevelyan, have proved to be some sort of a third beginning.

Her style has quietly changed in this late period until it is quite different in feel and sinew from her work in the 1950s and 1960s. She is partly unaware of this change. As she paints, day by day, she is not consciously endeavouring to alter her style. She still paints with passion, but her paintings have become more 'hard-edged'. This is a relative term, of course, but the incisive drawing that underlies her paintings is revealed in the final pictures as precisely delineated or silhouetted motifs. They exist in a kind of new order and simplicity. Her pictures now depend less on what appears in earlier work, such as *Artichoke Flowers* (1962) (Ill. 81), to be one vigorous rush of execution in which all the elements are almost thrown together by gutsy brushwork and thick applications of paint. Today, her pictures have air and space and order. Objects are separated, the intervals between them becoming as important as the objects themselves in order to make balanced and poised compositions that hold firm. There is more calculation. Objects no longer overlap or confuse each other. Clarity of shape is what matters.



167
Tuscan Fruit, 2005
 Oil on canvas
 39 x 49 cm (15³/₈ x 19¹/₄ in)
 Private collection

168 (b l w)
Playing Cards, 2002
 Oil on canvas
 40 x 50 cm (15³/₈ x 19³/₄ in)
 Bohun Gallery, Henley-on-Thames



169
Chest of Drawers, 2006
 Oil on canvas
 70 x 90 cm (27¹/₂ x 35³/₈ in)
 Credit: The Artist

Fedden is not afraid of strong, bright, rich colours; in fact, she loves them. Yet she knows the value of placing muted or even muddy colours near them so that her vivid reds, oranges, greens, or yellows can sing out (Ills 168 and 169). It is, however, in the refreshing, telling ways she uses those two ultimate colours, white and black, that she excels. 'I think black is a wonderful colour,' she enthuses. To her it is not gloomy at all. 'Think of the blacks in Manet's paintings. That young man in a black velvet jacket. Wonderful.'

I suspect Fedden thinks of Edouard Manet quite a lot (without in any way aping him), finding sympathy with his direct, apparently very simple statements in paint, his blacks and greys and whites, his vases of roses or baskets of pears, his sensuous interest in the life of objects – and his lemons. Like him, Fedden knows the value of lemons, their rind and segmented flesh. They appear in her paintings frequently. Lemons whole, cut, or half-peeled. Their form, their acidity, their feel. You can almost smell her lemons, virtually taste the juice. Above all, they are *colour*. It is the *yellow* of Fedden's lemons – a sharp accent of pure, sour colour – that proves irresistible.

Note
 1. *Estatica Metafisica*, Valoro Plastici (Rome), April/May 1919. Quoted in English in *Morandi's Legacy, Influences on British Art* by Paul Coldwell, Philip Wilson (London), pp 31, 48



172
Myross Bridge, 2004
Gouache
28.7 x 34.3 cm (11 1/4 x 13 1/2 in)
Private collection



174
Aldeburgh Beach, 2000
Oil on canvas
50.8 x 61 cm (20 x 24 in)
Private collection



173
Dunwich, 2000
Gouache
19 x 44.5 cm (7 1/2 x 17 1/2 in)
Private collection

A page in the diary at this point is taken up with a drawing of a decorated church, *St Barbara Goreme*, but she also made a pencil sketch in her sketchbook, *Goreme in Snow* (1969) (Ill. 175), a wonderfully schematic record of the eccentric formations confronting her, and the mountains beyond. It shows in direct terms the snow melting and the underlying forms emerging, like stripes along the back of a tiger.

Fedden is a *quick* artist (she says she can never understand how some artists spend six months on one painting), and this is one of the delights of her sketches on her travels. They go straight to the point, leaving out anything she does not need to remember.

A trip to India took place in 1967–8 (Ill. 176). Fedden found it difficult to stop writing jubilantly in her diary. On 1 January 1968:

on to Agra at sunset, just in time to get our first sight of the TAJ MAHAL with a rosy sunset glow on the celestial white marble. It is one of the great non-disappointments of the world. Far better, bigger, purer & more beautiful in every way than I imagined. It stands on a high perfect white marble platform with a lighthouse shape at each corner & is flanked on a lower level at each side by two perfect mosques in marble & pink sandstone; & behind drops away hundreds of feet to the broad beautiful Jumna River in a great crescent with the vast sandstone fort of Akbar in the distance.

Next day, Julian and Mary went to see the Taj Mahal again, at 8.30 a.m. The sun was just up. Because it was the Muslim festival marking the end of Ramadan, and the mosque that flanks the Taj was besieged, the Taj itself was more or less deserted. Mary has never forgotten having it virtually to the two of them. She records: 'We wandered about for two hours ... & could happily have stayed all day'. (Ill. 177)



175
Goreme in Snow, 1969
Pencil
38.5 x 54.4 cm (15 1/8 x 21 1/2 in)
Credit: The Artist



176 (above)
Goa, 1967
Pen and ink
26.7 x 22.8 cm (10 1/2 x 9 in)
Private collection

177 (opposite)
Taj Mahal, c. 1968
Oil on canvas
73.2 x 59.8 cm (28 3/4 x 23 1/2 in)
Private collection

