

An abstract painting featuring a large, textured orange-red background. On the left side, there is a prominent, light blue, rounded shape with dark outlines and some internal brushstrokes. Below this shape, there are several thin, vertical red lines extending downwards. In the lower right quadrant, there is a small, dark, circular mark with some internal detail. The overall style is expressive and gestural, with visible brushwork and a rich color palette.

Felice Hodges

Hodges

Felice Hodges

Unheard Music

WITHIEL SCULPTURE GARDEN
17TH DECEMBER 2022 - 14TH JANUARY 2023

LSG
Withiel

Cover:
Tango
mixed media on canvas
90 x 80cms

Following page:
Whispers
Mixed media on panel
30 x 60cms



Hodges



Unheard Music

The often-made analogy between music and abstract painting is especially apposite when considering Felice Hodges' work, for in painting she aspires to the condition of music. Her early training was in classical piano, and rhythmic structures have long been crucial in her thoughts about art. The artist grew up in New York, where her mother was a concert pianist and teacher of piano, and where Hodges began her own studies on the instrument at the tender age of four. Later, she went on to study, firstly at the Royal College of Music in London, then at Cornell University in New York. Although she attained a very high level of musicianship, she decided in her mid-twenties that the world of classical music was not for her, and switched courses, first studying art history at Cornell, then painting and sculpture in London. The transition came not entirely out of the blue, for Hodges had always been creative, and a passion for art was a constant in her family; her father collected German Expressionist works, and with him she visited galleries and museums from a young age. Now resident in England for over forty years, she began to operate fully as an artist in the 1990s, holding a first solo show in 2000, and exhibiting regularly ever since.

In a recent discussion, Hodges spoke of her recurrent use of certain motifs and phrases, comparing them to those of Beethoven and Bach, and referring to the latter's tight compositional structures, to his inventions, and the way in which he composed a series of works, each in a different key. Such considerations are brought to bear in Hodges' painting, in which, within her sensuous handling of materials, one notes finely calibrated shifts in pitch and tempo, and exclamatory flourishes of staccato line and colour set against passages of calm delicacy. There is a great freedom of application, particularly evident in the larger work. Its ostensible insouciance results from periods of meditative concentration, followed by energetic bursts of painting, then assimilation, editing, reworking; for the intense discipline of her musical training is one she carries forward into her art. Small-scale pieces on paper – Teal Lights and Skiff for instance –are equally demanding, and necessitate a hands-on approach in which the thick paper substrate and collage elements become especially tactile and malleable.



Ritual
Mixed media on canvas
101 x 101cms



Teal Lights
Mixed media on cotton rag paper
15 x15 cm



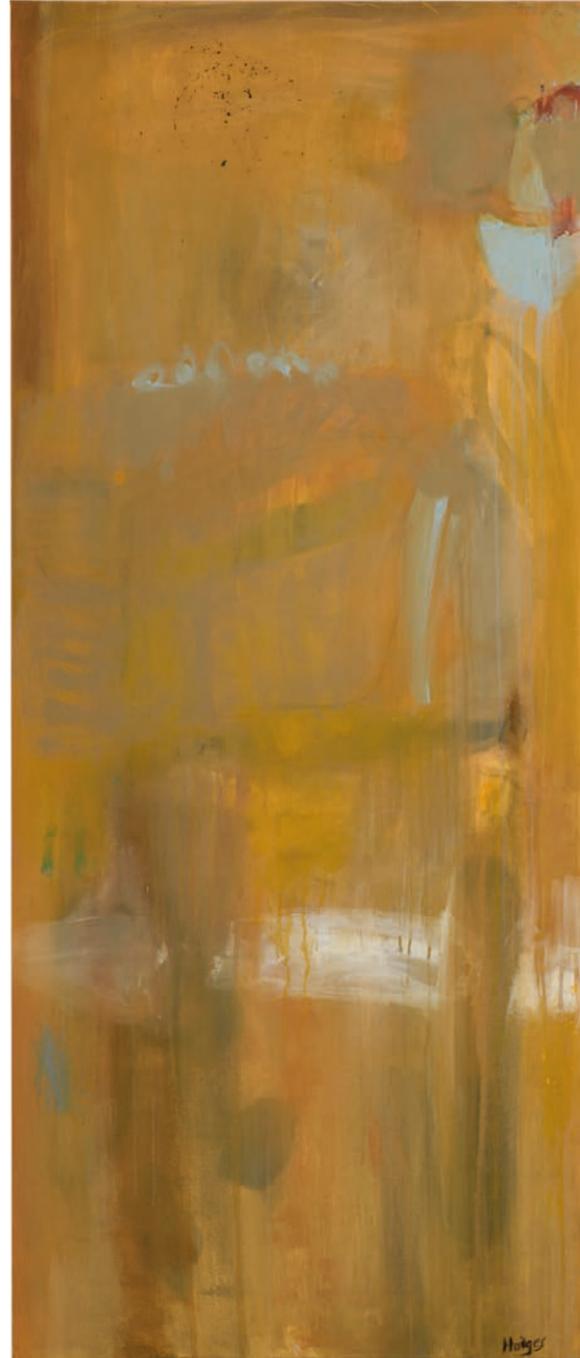
Skiff
Mixed media on cotton rag paper
30 x 22cm

Colour is central to Hodges, and she has over time gained a fearless confidence in its deployment. There are immensely subtle paintings here, formed largely from a limited tonal palette – *Beige Ground* is but one example – and also works in which large swathes of pure blacks and whites take precedence. In contrast are canvases such as *Cathédrale Engloutie* (titled after Debussy's poetic prelude for solo piano), in which a spired block of magenta and alizarin – the sunken cathedral of the composer's title – is partially submerged within a field of pale blue-grey. The rhythmic structures of the painting take their cue from those of Debussy's prelude.

While much of Hodges' work is comprised from an essentially abstract vocabulary of painterly gestures, loosely drawn shapes and signs, there is often an interplay between figuration and abstraction that ranges from the allusive to the explicit. Her motifs are frequently those of domestic objects: chairs and various types of vessels; vases, jugs, glasses. They serve both as compositional anchor points, and also metaphorically, grounding the work – and hence the artist – in both past and present. For time and the passage of time is another of Hodges' themes, and her vessels, be they drawn in outline, modelled in paint, or made from fragments of torn paper collage, symbolise not only present-day life, but also a history of human facture and usage stretching back to antiquity. In conversation the artist refers to the clay and alabaster vessels of ancient Egypt, containers of wisdom and secrets with which to journey to the afterlife. Such a notion is found in the still life *Excavation*, with its four forms set in an encrusted field of unbleached titanium, within which snippets of paper collage are submerged. And in fact, for Hodges the subject of archaeology is literally close to home, for her Dorset studio stands in close proximity to a site of excavation from which precious ancient artefacts were unearthed in the early twentieth century, and where Roman bricks remain in situ. The idea of time is also explored in two of the larger paintings shown here. Of equal dimensions, their titles – *Fall*, and *Printemps* – signify the dying back of autumn, and the renaissance of spring. Each is painted in diffuse stains and veils of dilute pigment. In both, warm ochres predominate, with greys, russet browns, and minor inflections of green and blues in *Fall*, and in *Printemps* a shimmering pale-yellow light and a single note of pink. Their atmospheric dynamics are spatially ambiguous, their variegated



Cathédrale Engloutie
mixed media on canvas
121 x 121cms



textures and earthy tones redolent of decaying frescoes. While these works clearly relate to the natural world, Hodges is at her most purely abstract in a series collectively titled *Out of Left Field*, based on American Colour Field painting. Mark Rothko is an obvious exemplar here, though Hodges also mentions the influence of Richard Diebenkorn's magisterial *Ocean Park* canvases. Several of the series are included here: *Midnight Blue Eclipse*, and *Divide by Rust*, are among them. Each formed of soft-edged panels and strips of colour, stacked either vertically or horizontally, these paintings demand of the viewer a pace of contemplation and engagement that is quite different to that of much else in Hodges' output. And in considering the full range of the artist's work, it is the ability to establish such a multiplicity of moods that becomes particularly striking; the orchestration of colour, scale, shape, line, and gesture, in the creation of a body of work that continues to develop to captivating effect.

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Fall
Mixed media on canvas
170 x 71cms



Printemps
Mixed media on canvas
170 x 71cms



Through the Hoop
Mixed media on paper
39 x 50cms

Golden Globe
Mixed media on canvas
200 x 200cms





Retreat
Mixed media on canvas
90 x 80cms



Tango
Mixed media on canvas
90 x 80cms



Beige Ground
Mixed media on canvas
91 x 122cms



Blonde in Tangiers
Mixed media on paper
139 x 88cms



Assemblage
Mixed media on paper
88 x 88cms



Antiquity
Mixed media on paper
20 x 19cm



Relic
Mixed media on canvas
31 x 23cms



Sandbanks
Mixed media on canvas
170 x 71cms



Full Circle
Mixed media on canvas
170 x 71cms



Three Vessels
Mixed media on panel
30 x 60cms



Excavation
Mixed media on panel
30 x 61cms



Citrus and Ecrú
Mixed media on panel
30 x 60cms



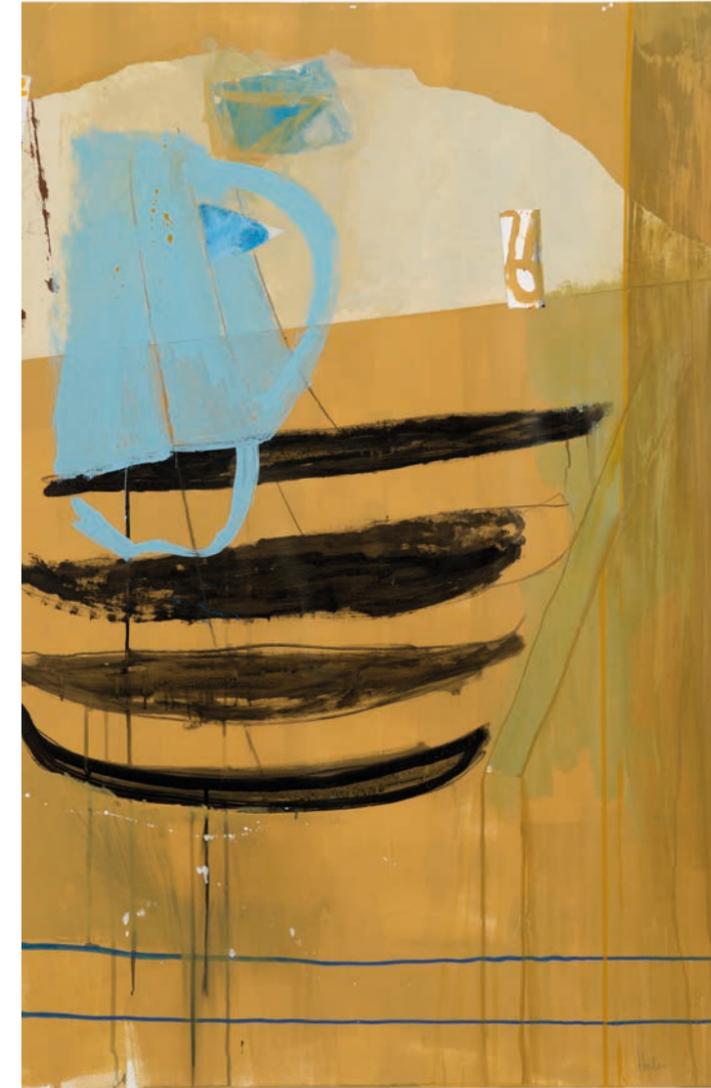
Two Blues
Mixed media on panel
30 x 60cms



Vessels
Mixed media on canvas
31 x 31cms



Giza
Mixed media on canvas
26 x 21cms



Flagon
Mixed media on paper
138 x 98cms



Congo Pink and Magenta
Mixed media on canvas
36 x 26cms



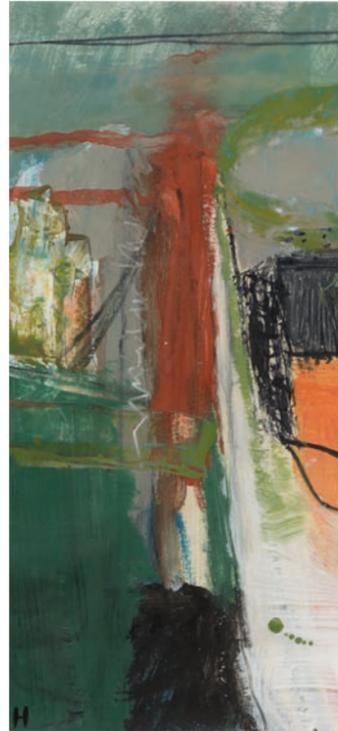
Whispers
Mixed media on panel
30 x 60cms



Coverack
Mixed media on paper
20 x 20cms



Balance on Chartreuse
Mixed media on paper
139 x 96cms



Tangerine Glow
Mixed media on paper
26 x 13cms



Savanna
Mixed media on canvas
160 x 122cms



Midnight Blue Eclipse
Mixed media on canvas
102 x 76cms



Shimmering Green
Mixed media on canvas
76 x 102cms



Kerry Green
Mixed media on panel
26 x 26cms

Back cover:
Printemps
Mixed media on canvas
170 x 71cms

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