



BULB LOG 11.....14<sup>th</sup> March 2011



**David Hockney at the Royal Academy of Arts**

Much of my time in the last few weeks has been spent travelling to give talks and visiting exhibitions in London.



**Picasso at the Tate Gallery**

## Tate still life



For those of you that do not know I am an artist as well as a gardener – in fact I do not separate these activities as I see gardening as another medium through which I can explore my art and creativity. Where ever I go I observe colour, form, texture and composition that I want to record in some way. It may be a drawing, painting, print, sculpture or photograph whichever is the easiest and most immediate. Photographs like this ‘still life’ of my tea tray in the Tate cafe

where I kept rearranging the objects fascinated by the contrasts of colour - how the black spoon on a white napkin was a sort of negative to the white knife on a black tray. The strong red of the cup really jumps out -then your eye is drawn to the white lettering and interior where you see the subtle ellipse of tea colour before your eye is drawn back to the positive/negative contrast of the plastic cutlery before returning back to the curve of the cup. Eventually your eye will find the curve of the table edge then when you really start to explore the image you will pick out the more subtle contrast of the rectangular black tray sitting on the circular black table.

## Tring Station

I saw this wonderful example of tone and texture on Tring station. Again explore the image composed of a series of rectangles. The tones are the result of wet areas but why should the water form these patterns as it slowly evaporates in the early morning? The four free form shapes within the strict rectangles are a wonderful contrast but would be less effective without the circle in the lower left one that provides the real energy of this image continually drawing



your eye. These photographs that I am constantly taking along with the many quick drawings I do in my pocket sketch book will often be worked up in my art to finished works or a even a series of paintings or prints.



### **Garden view**

I see our garden as an art work in progress. As an artist gardening is the most difficult medium I work in as I have less control with nature and the advancing of time ensuring that I never get to decide when the work is finished.



### ***Corydalis malkensis* and *C. solida***

Compositon, colour and texture are all as important in how we lay out and plant our garden as they are in a painting. The choice of colours and the contrasting shapes of the foliage all encourage the viewer's eye to dart around the scene in front of them. First appreciating the most obvious contrast here between the colours - pink, white and green before moving on to the more subtle contrast between the shape of sword-like *Galanthus* leaves and the soft rounded *Corydalis* leaves.



**Corydalis solida**

Corydalis are one of the most valuable plants for bringing colour to the early spring garden. They are easily grown in a moist humus rich soil and to keep them flowering freely they are best lifted and split up, every three years or so, in May just as they go dormant.



**Bulb bed**



### **Bulb bed**

The above two views show how this bulb bed is springing into life and will soon be covered in colour.



### **Slab Bed**

*Corydalis incisa*, *Eranthis* 'Guinea Gold' and *Taraxicum officinalis* in a corner of one of the slab beds.



**Corydalis incisa – (lumped with solida)**

This lovely contrast between the white and lilac seedlings is the result of planting out a pot of seedlings en-masse before they flowered so the wonderful effect is an accident. Artists will know well that some of the best effects that we achieve are originally the result of an accident which we choose to leave, develop and learn from. Through the course of time Art like gardening throws up a series of problems that we must solve or accept.



Isolating the flowers of **Eranthis 'Guinea Gold'** creates an effect like a colour field painting.



### ***Eranthis hyemalis***

The flowers of *Eranthis hyemalis* have been pushed past their best by the unusually warm weather we have been enjoying, up to 18C. I took this picture to show the mass of self sown seedlings of various ages from the simple cotyledons emerging from last year's seeds to some others that are now two and three years of age and ready to be transplanted to another bed.



### **Bulb house**



### **Narcissus**

It is time for the yellow trumpet type of daffodil to dominate in the bulb house where we have a lot of different forms many of which we also grow unprotected outside.



### **Narcissus pequenita**





**Narcissus hybrid**



**Narcissus jonquilla henriquesii**

The deliciously scented Jonquils are also now opening. I do not find these too long lived in the garden where they tend to dwindle and disappear after a few years – I will try some in the sand beds - they may do better there.



## **Narcissus**

We tend to think the *Narcissus romieuxii* types are small and the trumpets larger but this shows this is far from the case.

The tiny trumpet is *Narcissus* 'Ferdie' and the giant hoop petticoat *Narcissus* 'Mondieu'



***Narcissus* 'Dina Rose'**

A very beautiful triandrus hybrid that I got from Jim and Jenny Archibald.



**Narcissus cyclamineus and Crocus pelistericus**

*Narcissus cyclamineus* is happier growing outside as it dislikes too much heat or drying out so we grow it either in the garden beds or in a mesh basket plunged in sand as it is in this frame. Unfortunately it does not increase much by division so it has to be increased by seed and that is one of the reasons it is not more widely grown. Also it does not like its bulbs being dried and out of the soil for any length of time so it does not suit the drying process that the other *Narcissus* survive in commerce.



**Crocus pelistericus**

*Crocus pelistericus* is a snow melt species in the wild flowering as soon as the snow banks recede so it is accustomed to plenty of water when it is growing. In our garden it never goes completely dormant – because of the ever present moisture in the soil its new roots start to form, often in July, before the previous seasons leaves die down in August/September. This photograph hardly does justice to the beautiful rich purple/blue colour that appears in front of our eyes. I use plants to create effects in the garden just as I would use paints, inks, or any other medium when producing my art works. Viewers can home in on a small area of detail, like in the picture below, or stand back and view a wider area just as you would when viewing a painting.



***Scoliopus hallii* and *Corydalis solida***

A few more vignettes from the many plants that are emerging just now includes this subdued scene of an emerging bicoloured *Corydalis solida* seedling and behind the tiny, less than flamboyant flowers of *Scoliopus hallii* one of the plants that relies more on scent than looks to attract pollinators. Compare and contrast this with the glorious colour combination below of *Crocus herbertii* and a pink/red form of *Hepatica nobilis* where I have relied on the dramatic colour combination for this planting.



***Crocus herbertii* and *Hepatica nobilis***



***Erythronium dens canis***

There are so many new flowers appearing each day it is difficult to keep up and impossible to share them all with you in the bulb log but above may be a clue to what might appear in the following weeks.....