

RINGING CHANGES

Endellion Lycett Green's latest series of paintings celebrates the cycles of the natural world. She reveals how she has taken inspiration from her grandfather, the late poet Sir John Betjeman

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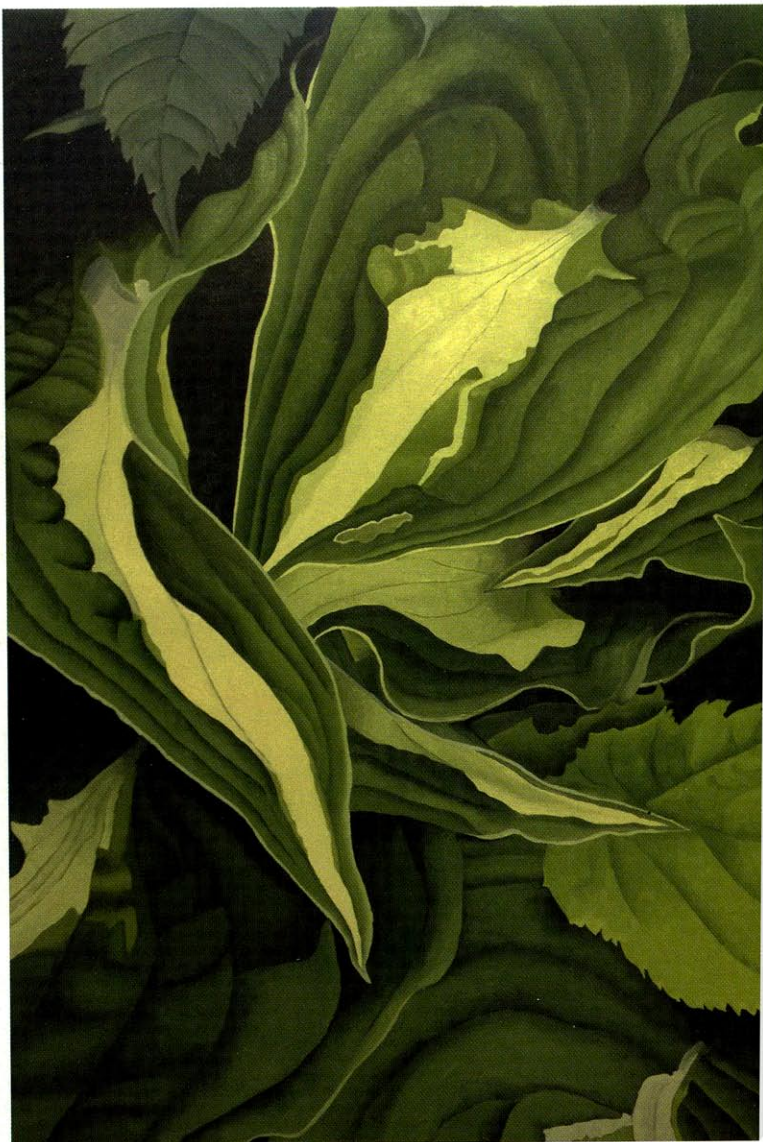
A new year is a time for fresh starts and one artist who has particularly taken this on board is Endellion Lycett Green. The Wiltshire-based painter's latest collection is entitled *Renewal* and explores the ways in which her own process mirrors how plants replenish themselves every year.

"I felt that rebirth, as an artist, was vital to my working practice and could be applied to the blank canvas – the sense that with every piece you are starting afresh," she explains.

"The actual painting entitled *Renewal* was of wild garlic in the spring, fresh from a long, hard winter. *Hemelsleutel* – a Dutch word that translates as 'live forever' or 'keys to heaven' – was the main piece so everything revolved round this idea of renewal being the key to life."

TOP *Hemelsleutel*, oil and gold leaf on linen, 126x213cm

ABOVE RIGHT *Flow of Life*, oil on linen, 91x121cm



Recently exhibited at London's Browse & Darby gallery, *Renewal* is a beautifully composed series, one that marks out Endellion as England's answer to Georgia O'Keeffe. Her latest works are monumental in scale, often measuring more than two metres tall. Her subject matter is entirely drawn from the natural world – geraniums, echinacea stems, thistle beds – but it is chosen as much for its scientific properties or poetic qualities as it is its colours and forms.

"Naturally the artistic process begins with seeing," she says. "I'm mesmerised, for example, at how two plants weave together, or at a plant's colour or aspect – things usually jump out at me. Then I will make some

loose sketches and take very carefully composed photographs, followed by some atmospheric reference pictures."

Back in her Pewsey Vale studio, Endellion will then produce a series of sketches, including 'blind' drawings that come out quite abstract and often suggest new avenues to explore. With these pinned across the large white walls of her studio (alongside countless photos of greenery), the painting process can begin, though this often starts in a rougher manner too.

"Sometimes I make an oil sketch where I feel I can make mistakes and be more liberal, or sometimes I'll work on the main piece first off."

That the creative process comes so naturally to Endellion is partly a result

of her upbringing. Born in 1969, she is the third of five children of the Savile Row tailor Rupert Lycett Green and the author and journalist Candida Lycett Green, who in turn was the only daughter of the poet Sir John Betjeman. "From an early age I felt I could be a poet or an artist if I wanted to," she recalls. "My grandfather was incredibly encouraging of the sensitive soul, and his life proved it could be done."

Endellion – or 'Delli' to her friends – was named after the Cornish town of St Endellion, made famous in a 1950 essay written by her grandfather that began "St Endellion! St Endellion! The name is like a ring of bells."

Growing up in a house filled with artworks by William Etty, Peter Blake and more, she drew and painted enthusiastically as a child ("I wasn't particularly talented, I just loved doing it"). It wasn't until the age of 15, however, that she finally made a work that she was pleased with – an "outstanding" drawing in charcoal. By the time of her degree in English

and Fine Arts at Exeter University, she had resolved to become a painter. "My family were all writers [so] I made a decision to express myself in paint as a way of doing something different."

Endellion's artistic influences are wide ranging, taking in everyone from Gustav Klimt, Gwen John and the aforementioned O'Keeffe, to more abstract artists such as Barnett Newman and Franz Kline. She also

Unsurprisingly though, perhaps her greatest influence remains closer to home, with the help and support she has received from her family and her grandfather in particular. "I have very fond memories of him as a person, so sweet and kind," she says.

"I used to write to him frequently and send him poems and drawings. After one such poem he wrote, 'If you always write when in the mood and

BELOW *Echinacea*,
oil on linen,
91x61cm

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had something of an epiphany upon seeing an early Picasso painting in New York. "I first saw *Woman Ironing (La Repasseuse)* at the Guggenheim when I was 22. I was moved beyond measure. It was as if the emotions of both the artist and the woman were held within the work. I felt I knew for the first time what great art was."

say what you feel and think, you will go on being a poet."

Renewal suggests that this most fascinating artist is putting his philosophy to the test in a different discipline on her own terms.

**Endellion is represented by
Browse & Darby, London W1.
www.browseanddarby.co.uk**

