

Laporte A History in Art





LAPORTE
A HISTORY IN ART





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Eric Fraser 1902–1983, *Chymist*, cat.43

Frontispiece:
Pitoiset, French School, c.1888
Leçons des Choses. Teinture et impression des tissus
(Dying and printing of fabrics)
cat.80

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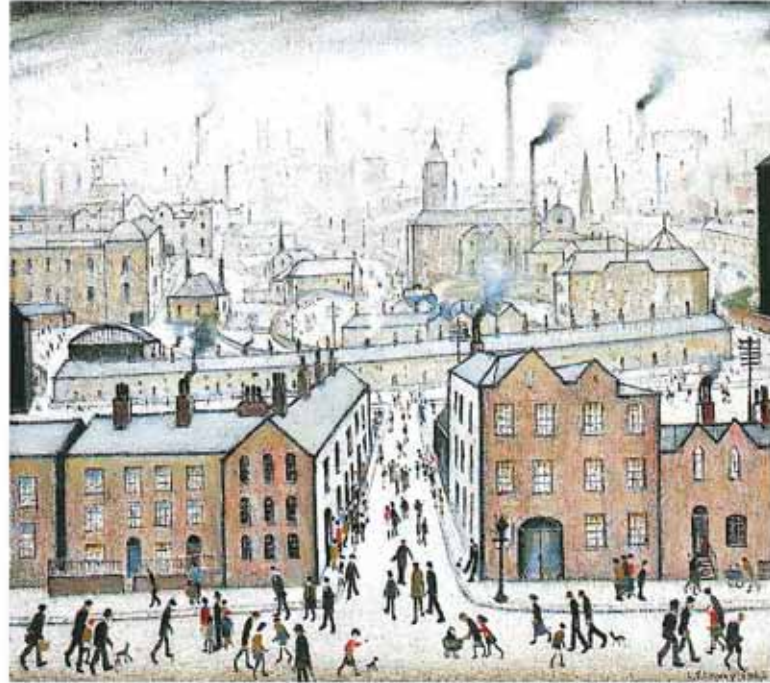
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Foreword

JIM LENG · CHIEF EXECUTIVE, LAPORTE plc



L.S. Lowry (1887-1976) *Industrial Landscape*
Signed and dated 1944 · oil on panel · 21 x 24 in / 53.3 x 61.3 cm
© Christie's Images Ltd 2000

Two apparently unconnected events coincided to stimulate the concept of establishing a Laporte art collection. The first was that Laporte's corporate headquarters which had previously been divided between Luton and Bedford Square in London were to be consolidated and relocated to Wigmore Street in the West End of London.

The second was that Laporte, in redesigning its business portfolio, was finally severing its historical roots and its previous bias towards the UK manufacture of industrial commodities, and refocusing towards the global manufacture of high value-added specialities.

The challenge facing the company was to create an art collection which would not only enhance the new, largely open-plan corporate offices but one which would, where possible, reflect the history of Laporte both to staff and visitors.

The problem of how to fund the new collection was solved by the sale of the company's painting by L.S. Lowry entitled *Industrial Landscape* at Christie's in November 1997.

With the funds now in hand the company interviewed a number of art consultants to help in building the new collection and Paul Liss was appointed. In his submission Paul undertook to build a collection of work by mainly British artists, many of whom would be largely unknown, neglected or forgotten but which in ten years time might be judged to be the best of its type. At the same time, the works would reflect the historical development of Laporte from its foundation to the present day.

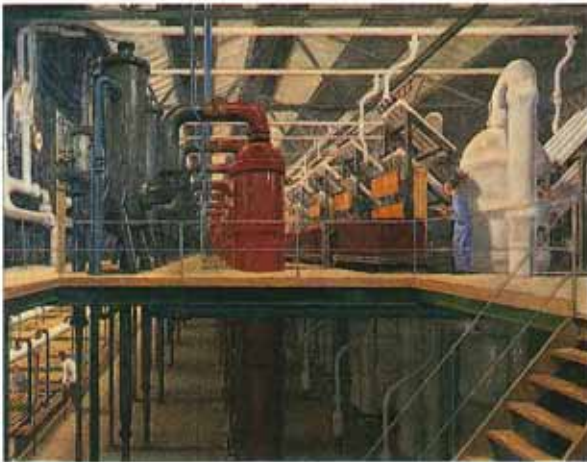
An Art Committee was established comprising Donald Andrews, Gillian Chapple, Roy Parrott and myself. The Committee was guided and cajoled by Paul and never used its veto – assuming it had one!

The highly successful conclusion of this activity was the creation of a collection of over two hundred works, many reflecting the company's history, and these were hung throughout the corporate headquarters on 3 August 1999.

Paul Liss continues to have responsibility for overseeing the Laporte art collection.

Laporte as a Patron of the Arts

PAUL LISS · CURATOR, LAPORTE CORPORATE ART COLLECTION



In 1947 Laporte commissioned Frank Oldham to record the company's activities at their Kingsway Works, Luton. The production of hydrogen peroxide changed over the years from the original 1890s process involving the reaction of barium peroxide and sulphuric acid, to the electrolytic process, developed by Laporte in 1929, and on to the autoxidation process which Laporte developed in the early 1950s and which is now used worldwide.

Clockwise from top left:

Hydrogen peroxide production of the 1890s, using barium peroxide in a batch process, Ray's Yard, Luton. Kingsway Works, Luton, 1947.

The 1930's Tunnel Kiln used in the manufacturing of barium peroxide for Hydrogen peroxide production. Distillation Units for concentrating Hydrogen peroxide made by the electrolytic process, mid 1940's.

On 27 November 1997, at Christie's, Laporte sold its industrial landscape by L.S. Lowry. The price achieved would have been a world auction record for the artist had Sotheby's not sold a more expensive work the previous day. The successful sale enabled Laporte to exchange a painting confined to the boardroom and seen by few, for a collection that would be available to everyone.

At different points during the post war era, Paul Hogarth, Leonard Barton and Frank Oldham had been commissioned by Laporte to produce paintings recording company activities and sites, so a company tradition of art patronage already existed. To celebrate Laporte's centenary in 1988 Alan Younger was commissioned to design a Rose Window for St Albans Cathedral (ill. p.83). Additionally, works by the Hanoverian artist, George-Henry Laporte, had been periodically acquired but no co-ordinated policy towards building a corporate art collection existed.

In building the new collection, three guiding principles were established:

[1] 'MAJOR' WORKS BY 'MINOR' ARTISTS

From the outset it was decided that if the paintings of 'major' established artists were pursued the acquisition budget would soon be exhausted on a handful of lesser works and the collection could never be anything other than mediocre. It was therefore decided that the core of the collection should be built around the acquisition of outstanding works by artists perceived to be 'minor', either

because they had historically been poorly documented or because, although once historically highly regarded, they had since fallen out of fashion.

The work, for instance, of Sir Frank Brangwyn – the most famous British artist of his generation – has been given particular prominence (cat.13–18; ill. pp.26–29). Brangwyn started his career (in the 1890s) painting murals alongside Toulouse Lautrec and Bonnard and ended it painting murals (in the 1930s) for the Rockefeller Centre, Picasso and Matisse having declined the same commission. In spite of this, today his work is barely known. That it has been possible to acquire an important study for the Rockefeller Centre (cat.18; ill. p.29) and a large preparatory cartoon for Brangwyn's decoration of the House of Lords (cat.17; ill. p.28) within the Laporte collection is a remarkable quirk of fate – had they been acquired at a different point in the cycle of taste either might easily have absorbed the entire budget.

[2] WORKS OF MUSEUM QUALITY

Works acquired by museums have to conform to rigorous standards; does a potential acquisition come with a good provenance? is it in good condition? is it an outstanding example of an artist's work? does it represent good value?

By asking questions of this nature for potential acquisitions the Art Committee were able to impose a degree of objectivity to an essentially subjective process.

[3] A LIVING COLLECTION

As well as acting as a custodian of historic works, it was decided that the art collection should be supportive of contemporary artists – hence the commission of Keith New's *Lake at the edge of a quarry* – Clophill, Bedfordshire, 1998 (cat.69; ill. p.51), and the major cycle of works by Arturo Di Stefano (cat.35–38; ill. pp.35–37). Provision has been made to allow for the gradual and selective addition of works to the collection.

THREE KEY OBJECTIVES were established in compiling the collection:

[1] TO CREATE A STIMULATING ENVIRONMENT

The collection has attempted to accommodate the broadest range of tastes by drawing on the remarkable diversity of British art during the past 120 years. The aim of the hanging scheme has been to create a picture-rich environment which is visually uplifting, combining works which are instantly legible with works which are visually more challenging (see for instance pp.32/33). Where possible, works have been placed to accentuate different areas of activity within the office – for instance, the board room is now dominated by Monnington's celebration of science (cat.67; ill. p.49), a design originally conceived for the Conference Hall of Bristol Council House; the Eric Fraser designs for the 1938 Glasgow Exhibition of Health have been located in the office area responsible for Health and Safety (cat.43; ill. p.41).

[2] TO TELL THE STORY OF BRITISH ART

By deliberately including some of the less well known talents of British art the collection provides an opportunity to represent British art of the last 120 years in a new light. The new millennium is bound to result in a re-assessment of the achievements of the 20th century and many of the artists in the Laporte collection are likely to be acknowledged as amongst the unsung heroes of their generations.

[3] TO TELL THE STORY OF LAPORTE

From the outset, it was agreed not to confine the choice of subject matter to a rigid dogma but certain themes would, for obvious reasons, find favour:

– works of art reflecting the company's interest in science and exploration (Monnington, cat.67; ill. p.49, Fraser, cat.43; ill. pp.40–1, and Tunnard, cat.97; ill. p.63)

– works of art reflecting the company's Northern roots (Brannan, cat.19, Brook, cat.20–23; ill. pp.30–31) and subsequent global expansion (Brangwyn, cat.13–18; ill. pp.27–29)

– works of art produced in key years of the company's history (Raven-Hill, cat.83; ill. p.16)

– works of art reflecting the company's key areas of activity:

– hydrogen peroxide is used in the bleaching of wool and straw (see Crawford, p.33 and Knights, p.48)

– finings are used in the production of traditionally brewed beer (see Tindle, p.60 and Fraser, p.40)

– aluminium sulphate ensures purity of drinking water (see Harvey's *Village Gossips*, reproduced on the front cover)

– bentonites are used for grouting in tunnel construction and limestone, a by-product of hydrofluoric acid, is used in the construction of roads and railways (see Gere, p.42 and Kelly, p.45)

Lastly, Catherine Hassall's essay – *From Lead White to Titanium Dioxide* (see pp.17–19) – outlines the company's involvement with chemicals which are the mainstay of the basic ingredients from which works of art are made. This has been one of the most unexpected and exciting of the tie-ins between the company and its art collection.

These examples demonstrate the way in which works of art help bring the company's activities alive. They represent the end products of which Laporte chemicals are often the essential ingredient.

The Laporte Collection

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR · ART CRITIC, THE TIMES

In 1987 the concept of 'Modern British', either as a meaningful label or as a reassurance to potential buyers that what they were about to purchase fitted comfortably into an overall picture, had not yet been floated. In a sense, you might expect the major Royal Academy show *British Art in the 20th Century*, which opened in January 1987, to have been definitive, establishing a sort of canon which might be agreed with or disagreed with, accepted in toto or modified here and there. That, however, was not part of the agenda. The show's subtitle was 'The Modern Movement', and what its devisers wanted to establish was that Britain formed a vital, even a central, part in the great stream of European modernism, rather than being an eccentric tributary, if not a complete backwater.

So did it demonstrate that Modern British was modern as well as British? Well, yes and no. Certainly it showed that there were, ever since the 1900s, British artists who were fully aware of what was going on in Continental Europe, who studied in Paris or Munich and followed in the footsteps of leading foreign modernists or belonged, loosely, to their schools. Unfortunately, it also tended to make British art look largely imitative, trailing about twenty years behind its Continental contemporaries. Even artists of genuine originality and sincere avant-garde aspirations, such as Ben Nicholson, ended up seeming rather marginal, because they were seeking eminence in the wrong ball-park.

But, perhaps more important in any attempt to produce a coherent picture of British art in the 20th century, there

was the whole question of who was left out in this pursuit of modernity at all costs. First of all, there was virtually everyone who did not explicitly claim to be modern. A few cats who walked by themselves were admitted. Figures like Stanley Spencer, Paul Nash and Edward Burra could hardly be left out, and were, interestingly, the artists that made the most profound impression on foreign visitors to the exhibition – mainly because they offered something idiosyncratic and unfamiliar.

But while Gwen John, enjoying a spell of fashionability owing largely to feminist revaluation, was included, her brother Augustus John could safely be left out. He was just himself, only for a brief early period – if at all – at the cutting edge of cosmopolitan art. The same applied to most artists who remained faithful to a tradition-based range of realistic representational styles. Occasionally Surrealist connections could be called in to justify inclusion, as in the case of Paul Nash and, by stretching it a bit, Edward Burra. But by and large they were excluded wholesale, despite the influence elsewhere of *Réalisme et Réalismes*, a very convincing attempt at the Centre Pompidou in Paris to reinstate realism of various kinds as an alternative, equally modern tradition, whether exemplified by Cocteau's *Rappel à l'Ordre* in post-1918 France, *Neue Sachlichkeit* in Weimar Germany, or Socialist Realism in the USSR.

Hence, I suspect, the invention of Modern British as a label and a category. It implies a coherence, if not actually a programme. Certainly the other important schools of

20th century realism had their programmes, their manifestos. So why not ours? Much as one mistrusts generalizations, especially when applied to national character, it must be said that the British, and perhaps British artists in particular, tend to be wayward and ungovernable. They mistrust manifestos and art movements with a programme. Perhaps they have adopted more completely the tenets of the Romantic Movement than anyone else – or at least have been more unready than anyone else to throw them off. In Britain the artist is still somehow conceived of as one not wholly accountable to reason, impatient of disciplines, impossible to regiment.

It would be wrong if he were any different: hence, perhaps, the difficulty that Ben Nicholson has found posthumously in making his way back into the pantheon, because he seems just too cool, controlled, sleek and sophisticated for our concept of the great artist, who should definitely give the impression at least of being a bit more shaggy and ill-kempt. If that can happen to an artist so quintessentially monomaniac and self-absorbed as Nicholson, it is clearly only to be expected that the one programme Modern British has ever had is an unspoken but clear determination to do without a programme altogether.

Of course rejecting the idea of a programme does not prevent subsequent generations from inferring one from your actions. Often what these theorists after the event arrive at is a reading of what Henry James called the tone of the times. But the tone of the times can make very strange bedfellows. In the early Thirties in France Cocteau and the Surrealists were daggers drawn, following completely different drummers. Or so they thought. But now Cocteau's orphic film *Le Sang d'un Poète* is virtually indistinguishable philosophically, or even graphically, from the Dali/Buñuel *Un Chien Andalou* – entirely because they are of and reflect the same generation.

So looking at the course of Modern British as a school or

a genre, we have to observe affinities and at the same time recognise that they are largely non-elective. Fortunately very few of those directly involved are still around to castigate us for our taste in disorderly assembly backed up by wild surmise.

A few unarguable observations are perhaps in order. First, that Modern British is almost invariably representational. In the present gallery only Sir Thomas Monnington (President of The Royal Academy, no less) (cat.67; ill. p.49) seems to depart significantly from that, and he in the cause of Design, where much latitude is allowed (after all, most people would happily accept as a curtain fabric what they would balk at displayed in a picture-frame), rather than in Fine Art properly speaking. Second, it may be safely assumed that while the draughtsmanship will be of crystalline precision, the style of painting will be subject to Post-Impressionist fall-out. It may be in the colours applied to a composition which is at base eminently sober and correct, or it may be in the application of paint with an improvisatory flourish which conceals the shrewd calculation of the basic concept.

Beyond that, almost anything goes. Never mind the length, feel the quality. And this, totally pragmatic, is surely not a bad basis for the evaluation of art. Every work in this collection is clearly good of its kind, and if that is so, what does it matter that the kinds themselves are extremely diverse? Are we looking, as Nikolaus Pevsner was, for the Englishness of English Art – or at least the Britishness of Modern British? And if so, should it worry us if Britishness, like Modernity, proves to be much more elusive a quality than at first glance we might suppose?

For one thing, many key artists are only part-British, either because of their ancestry or their wandering habits in their own lifetime. Sir Frank Brangwyn (cat.13-18; ill. pp.26-29), for example, is unique (apart from, perhaps, Sir

Alfred East in Kettering (cat.39)) in that he has a personal museum devoted to his work. As if that were not odd enough, the museum is actually in Bruges, because he was born there, though more or less by chance, his parents being British briefly settled in Belgium for financial reasons. A tenuous reason for doubting Brangwyn's Britishness, but it does at least imply a degree of cosmopolitanism which is borne out in his subsequent career.

As to whether his art seems British, well, it depends what you mean by British. He was a sensualist through and through, revelling in strong colours and flamboyant shapes. He was passionately excited by the human body, male and female: while his artistic obsession was with the musculature of the well-developed male, in his 'real' life all his devotion seems to have been towards the ladies – a dichotomy easier to live with for a pre-Freudian artist born in 1867 than one like, say, Lucian Freud, born in 1922 immediately under the long shadow of his illustrious grandfather. Brangwyn is untypical in his form of Britishness only if you assume that Brits are necessarily cold and correct and inhibited. And who would assume that any more?

On the modernity side of the equation, an historical sense must be brought into play. Modern by the standards of his day Brangwyn certainly was: after all, he was already turned fifty when Picasso painted *Les Femmes d'Alger* and set the world by its ears. But for the generation for whom *l'art nouveau* really was new, his credentials were excellent: after working in his teens with William Morris, he designed in 1895 the exterior decoration of Siegfried Bing's Paris shop/gallery *L'Art Nouveau*, which gave the whole movement its name. By 1930 he was in the forefront of Deco design, with light fittings and china as well as murals for the liner *Empress of Britain*. Modern British undoubtedly, but both modern and British in his own highly idiosyncratic way.

One could construct similar templates for the modernity and Britishness of other awkward customers in the arts, like Maxwell Armfield (cat.2-6; ill. p.23), another Brit by birth and internationalist by inclination. Armfield trained in England, France and Italy, and subsequently spent much time in America, where he was, if anything, more prized than in his native land. A measure of his cosmopolitanism may be found in the conversation which took place at a party in 1972, the last year of his life. He had requested that Duncan Grant, the Bloomsbury painter, be invited, since he had not seen him for 'some time'. When Duncan arrived Max remarked on the long gap, and Duncan said 'I don't suppose you remember when it was we last met.' No, said Max. 'It was in 1912', said Duncan; 'and I don't suppose you remember where and with whom?' No, said Max. 'Well, it was in Chartres Cathedral. I had taken Nijinsky down to see it, and we came upon you by chance, sketching in the nave.'

Armfield's own style is Romantic, Symbolist and, as with Brangwyn, starts in the heart of Art Nouveau and progresses by leaps and bounds to a sort of streamlined Deco which owes more to Astaire/Rodgers movies than to the Bauhaus. There is nothing really parochial about his art: his Britishness shows itself rather in a rooted determination to go his own way, whoever follows, and the devil take the hindmost. If either Brangwyn or Armfield had been included – the very idea seems inconceivable – in *British Art in the 20th Century*, they too would probably have come in for foreign notice and approval as examples of the famous British eccentricity, allied to extraordinary talent.

In a superficially lighter vein, there are artists who are there to represent a distinctively British line of illustration and caricature, often allied with the tradition of nonsense writing and children's literature – which may be closely allied but are not necessarily (not in Britain anyway) the same

thing. Eric Fraser (cat.43; ill. pp.1, 40-41) was an illustrator willing to turn his hand to anything and make it his own. Modern machinery, gods and monsters, Victorian ladies and gentlemen, flappers and cads were all grist to his mill. And whatever the subject, he found a way of expressing it in his own clipped and forceful style, which, through its frequent use as illustration to the *Radio Times* in its wartime heyday, marked itself on several generations of the English as what illustration ought to be.

Other familiar names fit this very local, though not exactly cottage, industry. There is Felix Kelly (cat.57-58; ill. p.45), with his unique touch for certain haunting aspects of the English countryside, perhaps intensified by his being born a New Zealander, and first encountering 'his' England, a land of country houses, quaint provincial railways, mild-mannered ghosts and the Industrial Revolution in picturesque decay, through the medium of his early reading and a vivid imagination. There are the bold prints of Sir William Nicholson (cat.70-71, ill. p.53), Ben's father and in his early days half of the Beggarstaff Brothers (the other half being his brother-in-law James Pryde), who produced in the 1890s a series of posters so powerfully stylised and memorable in their impact that even Toulouse Lautrec was impressed. Nearer to our own time there is Paul Hogarth (cat.54), who has taken the sober tradition of topographical illustration and turned it into something very personal, where an element of comic caricature is combined with precise observation and an overriding human sympathy.

Foreigners in Britain often complain that the British are stand-offish, or maybe shy, and at any rate difficult to get to know well; beneath a certain superficial amiability there is an unplumbed depth of reserve. Fred Uhlman (cat.98-100; ill. p.62) is one who seems to have penetrated the surface with the utmost ease. In fact, he regarded himself as an Englishman by choice, and even called his autobiography

The Making of an Englishman – a process which took him detailed study but ended in triumphant success. During the war, when he might have felt most excluded, he spent some time musing upon the horrors which were being enacted the other side of the Channel, but for the rest he buried himself in the mining areas of Wales and painted the miners' cottages and the mountains beyond with an intensity of feeling which becomes at times almost visionary – but visionary in a way that such dyed-in-the-wool Englishmen as Samuel Palmer would have recognised and experienced it.

Many of the other artists represented claim inclusion as much as anything because of their sheer wilful peculiarity. Harold Hitchcock (cat.53) paints his fantasy scenes with a curious wit and a brooding intensity which can at times, like all the best fairy stories, become decidedly sinister. If he is not quite like anyone else, neither is John Tunnard (cat.97; ill. p.63). At first glance Tunnard would appear to be the opposite of Hitchcock: whereas Hitchcock looks towards the past, a world in which Dicky Doyle might feel at home, Tunnard seems to echo the pylon-praising poets of the Thirties, finding romance and mystery in the paraphernalia of radio and television, and eventually in space travel itself. His work looks to the future, but still through the prism of his own day, and to us these quasi-abstract visions seem ineffably Festival of Britain, with their smoothly curving baffle-board shapes bathed in the unearthly light of another planet.

But then, why not? Any artist worth his salt will have to belong to his period and see through the eyes of his period. It is not by seeking universality that one achieves it. The general is arrived at through the particular, and before permanence is achieved the artist has to go through the cycle of being topical and immediate, followed by being a bit old-fashioned, followed by being sadly dated. Then, with

luck, 'dated' becomes 'period', and finally the artist becomes history, which can be consigned to the dustbin or polished up and cherished for itself according to choice. Never write anyone off completely. Never, if they happen to be British, get annoyed because they do not fit neatly into any pre-organized category; pigeonholes may be easy, but they are seldom very profitable.

If we look at one of the most recent entrants in the list, we can see further evidences of continuity within diversity. Arturo Di Stefano (cat.35-38; ill. pp.35-37) is a Liverpudlian, brought up in Liverpool but born, as the name implies, of Italian parents. As a British artist of his generation (he was born in 1955) he has all the right credentials, having studied at Goldsmith's College of Art and the Royal College of Art, while for European credibility one can throw in a period at the Accademia Albertina, Turin. But then things do not quite add up in the conventional way. Despite having been at Goldsmith's, he is not interested in the Conceptual or in installation. He was at the Royal College at the height of its craze for equipping its students for life in the real world, by pushing them in the direction of design or the newer media like film and video, but he emerged resolutely a painter.

Italians, of course, can be just as stubborn as the English. But Di Stefano's particular insistence on being a square peg in a round hole – and making us somehow feel that all the round holes are in the wrong – has a genuinely

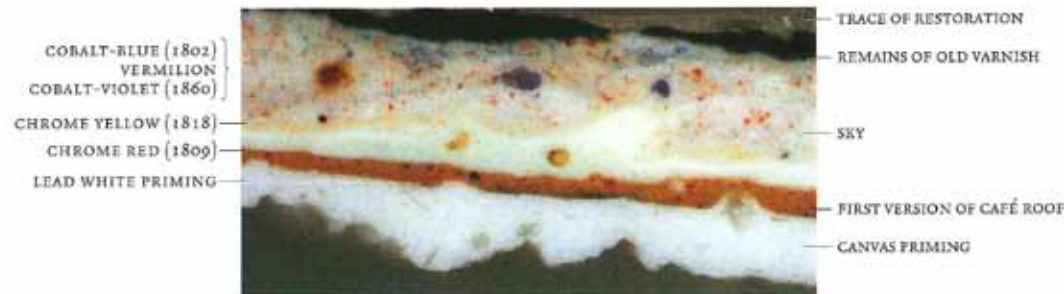
English ring to it. And if one turns to the painting itself, the same marks are all over it. Di Stefano is a realist; he unrepentantly uses photographs, and even emphasizes from time to time the photographic quality, so that no one can accuse him of cheating or taking an undeclared short cut. The pictures have a tenebrous, faintly ghostly quality about them, as though to contradict or subvert the ordinariness they seem to assert. Clearly Carel Weight is not the only Brit who can sense the ghost at noon; the Euston Road School did not have a monopoly on the dusty townscape lying heavily under the summer sun.

Often the British artist – and this is as true of Di Stefano as of Brangwyn – asserts his modernity and his Britishness alike by ostentatiously turning his back on them both. Like the beleaguered Pimlico community in the Ealing Films classic *Passport to Pimlico*, they could assert 'Of course we're British. It's just because we're British that we insist in our right to be Burgundian.' Not for nothing has it been said that anyone wishing to penetrate to the heart of Englishness should read *Wuthering Heights* and *Alice in Wonderland* in close conjunction. The essence of modernity also, at least as the British interpret it. Which is no doubt why a dash of Surrealism comes naturally to British artists who hardly know what it is in Continental theory. And so, finally, who cares whether the term Modern British has any real meaning, provided it offers a formulation to silence all arguments. For the Snark was a Boojum, you see.



Leonard Raven-Hill (1867–1942), *Café Scene*, 1888. Signed and dated - oil on canvas - 13 x 17 in / 33 x 43.2 cm, cat.83
1888 marks the year of Laporte's foundation

Cross-section of paint from the pink background at the top edge of *Café Scene*. In 1888 when the picture was painted, red vermilion had been in use for centuries, but the blue cobalt stannate, violet cobalt phosphate, yellow lead chromate and red basic lead chromate all seen here, were relatively new inventions of the nineteenth century. The lead white layer at the bottom is the canvas priming. The brown line above it is an early version of the café roof, later painted out. Above the brown, the pink of the sky is a swirl of paint created by one brush stroke picking up another. Artists like the Impressionists, painted 'wet-in-wet' like this, when they needed to work quickly to capture transient effects.



From lead white to titanium dioxide: a century of change in paint

CATHERINE HASSALL · PIGMENT ANALYST AND CONSULTANT ON HISTORIC PAINT

Painting tools have changed little since *Café Scene* was painted in 1888 and the artist, Raven-Hill, would have felt quite comfortable with the brushes, palette knives and tubes of paint used a century later by Hillier for his *Mud on the Road* (cat.52; ill. p.44), but he would have found that inside those familiar aluminium tubes, quite a revolution had taken place.

Raven-Hill's paint was a mixture of linseed oil and a set of pigments that were almost entirely inorganic in origin. Some of them – lead white (basic lead carbonate), vermilion (mercuric sulphide), red lead (lead tetroxide), natural ochres (iron oxide) and carbon black – were used by Giotto back in the thirteenth century, but the brightest reds, yellows and blues came from chromium, cadmium, strontium, barium and cobalt, elements which were extracted economically for the first time in the 19th century. After squeezing the paint onto his palette, Raven-Hill would have mixed it with a brush of hog's bristles, diluted it with turpentine, and brushed the colour onto the primed canvas. When the picture was finished, he would have waited many weeks for the linseed oil to polymerise, and be dry enough to varnish.

Hillier used an entirely different set of pigments, but more importantly, they were suspended in acrylic paint: an aqueous emulsion of polymerised esters of acrylic and methacrylic acids made using organic peroxides and persulphates. Like Raven-Hill, he squeezed paint from tubes onto his palette, but he mixed and diluted the colours with water, and when the colours were brushed out

onto the canvas, the paint cured and was dry in the few minutes it took for the water to evaporate. Hillier used these quick drying properties to build up thin washes of blue for his huge sky, and to draw in the crisp outlines of the tree, but the medium can also be used for textured, brushy paint, many millimetres thick, and any combination in between. Acrylics can reproduce many of the effects of oils, and once they have dried on the canvas, they are hard to identify by eye.

The artist's range of acrylic paints was developed specifically for a group of Mexican mural painters working in the inter-war years. They wanted a paint that was quick drying, that would survive extreme climatic conditions, and was porous enough for moisture from the wall to evaporate through it. The laboratory employed to do the research worked with the plastic resins that had long been used in the industrial field to make moulded domestic items, perspex, plexiglass etc. No one had thought to adapt them to the very specific requirements of painters. In fact, since the Industrial Revolution there has always been a time lag between industrial developments and the appearance of new materials in the paint box.

The same delay has affected the newest generation of artists' paints, the 'alkyds' which were of huge importance in domestic and industrial paint long before they reached the studio. They are based on oil-modified polymers, and so are miscible with white spirit, or turpentine, and have a more controlled drying time than acrylics. Manufacturers of these paints are proud of the fact that they can be used to

reproduce all the treasured properties of oil paint.

The introduction of acrylics was a step change in artists' materials. The change in the range of pigments has been more incremental, but it has been enormous. Today, the Colour Index, produced by the Oil and Colour Chemists' Association, lists more than seven hundred pigments. Back in Raven-Hill's day a similar list would have included about seventy. Most of the new colours in that Index are organic, and in recent years developments of pigments and dyes have been closely related. The earliest organic pigments were based on anilene, and the very first of these was 'Perkin's Mauve', invented in the 1860s. Up to that point there never had been a true mauve, and the colour became briefly very popular. The dye was used for fabrics worn by the whole fashionable world, including Queen Victoria, and the pigment was used for printing postage stamps. Other colours followed, but the early anilenes faded disastrously, and painters who had taken them up lost confidence in the source. However, new formulations this century mean that anilene is the basis of many of today's brightest and most reliable colours. They are used mostly for printing inks, where flat, intense hues are required, but some have crept onto the artist's palette. A trace of Hansa yellow, an anilene derivative, was found in the green used by Uhlman for his *Red Sky over Cottages* (cat.99).

The sky of Hillier's *Mud on the Road* contains another modern organic pigment. The paint is a mixture of Prussian blue (invented 1704) and phthalocyanine blue, a pigment discovered in the 1920s as a blue impurity in the vats of the South Metropolitan Gas Company. Phthalocyanine is one of the most important blues used today, both industrially and as an artist's material. A significant 20th century red organic pigment was found in the bright red highlights in Cuneo's *Rolling Mill* (cat.33; ill. p.34) see graph p.19. It is alizarin, an anthraquinone which, until the end of the 19th century was extracted from crushed madder roots; today it is all produced synthetically.

Soluble organic dyes have to be translated into insoluble matter if they are to be useful in paint, otherwise they may bleed. Some are produced as 'pigment dyestuffs', others are precipitated as insoluble 'toners' by reacting acidic dyes with suitable salts, but the medieval method of converting soluble dyes to pigment 'lakes' by striking them onto a colourless inorganic base, is still widely practised. The alizarin dye, used in Cuneo's painting, has been turned into a crimson lake by chemically bonding it, in the old fashioned way, to a base of blanc fixe, a product made by Laporte.

One of the most significant changes witnessed in this collection of paintings, is the slow abandonment of lead white. Worries about toxicity hastened the introduction of zinc oxide as a substitute, over a hundred and fifty years ago, but lead white had developed a unique place in the affections of oil painters and they were very reluctant to give it up. The basic lead carbonate bonds chemically with linseed oil, forming lead soaps, and the resulting homogenous paint has excellent brushing properties. Lead white is used for almost all the early paintings in this collection, and occurs as late as the 1970s, on Uhlman's *Red Sky over Cottages*.

Pure zinc oxide does not share the special handling properties of lead white, moreover it has a lower refractive index, and is therefore considerably less opaque in oil. Kelly used zinc white in the 1950s for his *Gothic Lodge* (cat.57; ill. p.45) as he wanted translucent washes of colour, and did not need solid whites, but this is a rare find.

In a humbler form, as a primer, zinc white is evident in many of the paintings. Zinc sulphide, co-precipitated with barium sulphate to produce 'lithopone' (used widely as a white for house paint and for cheap ranges of artists' materials) is employed as a primer for a large number of paintings in the collection.

Zinc oxide was sold to water colour painters, as Chinese White, with much greater success. Gum arabic, collected from the wounds of trees, is the binding medium of watercol-

our. Unlike linseed oil, gum does not fully coat and protect the pigments, so chemically sensitive ones are at risk from pollution. In the past, hydrogen sulphides in the atmosphere have ruined many pictures by turning white lead carbonate to black lead sulphide, so water colourists were happy to switch to the new material. Brangwyn used a mixture of zinc oxide and chalk for the white highlights on his watercolour of *Red Indians* (cat.15). In oil the chalk, with its low refractive index, would be completely transparent, but in gum it has the properties of a powder and retains all its whiteness. Coburn Witherop also used zinc white because his *Moon over Mullion* (cat.101; ill. p.64) is painted in animal glue tempera, a medium which behaves like watercolour.

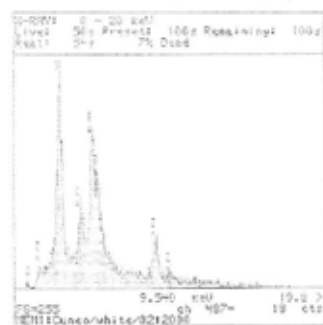
The story of whites ends with titanium dioxide, first produced as a pigment in the early 1920s and manufactured on a huge scale by Laporte from the 1930s onward. It was slow to be adopted by artists, but today it is the principal white on the painter's palette. We can see it used for the snow in Peter Brook's *Dean Head Valley* painted in 1970 (cat.20; ill. p.30). In the early years, titanium white pigment was produced in the anatase form, and only after the Second World War was the more opaque rutile form brought into production. This provides a very helpful marker in the difficult business of detecting forgeries of early 20th century art.

The use of whites in the Laporte collection, shows how very conservative British painters were, and it was not just

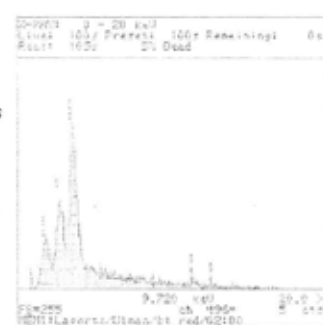
whites, all new pigments were in industrial use long before they became adopted for easel painting. Cadmium red, invented in 1910, was used for printing shortly after it was produced, but in these pictures, the earliest it occurs is on Uhlman's *Red Sky over Cottages*, painted in the 1970s (see graph below). Prior to that, vermilion and red lead, two medieval pigments, were used for the very brightest of red spots. For instance, red lead was used for the railway signals on Bliss's *Railway Bridges at Blackheath* (cat.12) in 1932, and in 1940 for the red spotlights in Pears's *Searchlight Practice* (cat.78; ill. p.55).

The take-up may have been reluctant, but the change has nevertheless been relentless. Today all the archaic pigments have gone, including many 19th century products which were not able to pass the rigorous tests of modern industry. Laporte has been part of this revolution: the company no longer makes titanium white, but its interest in pigments continues with the synthetic iron oxides. These have taken the place of the ochres and umbers that were once quarried and milled for paint. The iron oxides are brighter and more intense than the native ores, and cover a range of colours from black to yellow, with every shade of purple, red, brown and orange in between. Examples of many of them have been found on the most recent paintings in this collection, a very visible link between the chemical industry and the painter's studio.

Analysis, using a scanning electron microscope, of the white paint used in Cuneo's *Rolling Mill* (cat.33; ill. p.34). The spectrum shows zinc, barium and sulphur, and the pigment is therefore lithopone, a co-precipitate of zinc sulphide and barium sulphate.



X-ray analysis of the red used in Uhlman's *Red Sky over Cottages* (cat.99), painted in 1970. The spectrum shows cadmium, sulphur and selenium, and the red is therefore pure cadmium red [cadmium seleno sulphide]. This pigment replaced vermilion, the bright red used by Raven-Hill.



The Laporte Art Collection

CATALOGUE NOTE

A complete catalogue of the Laporte Collection, at January 2000, is given at the end of this book. The following plates illustrate some of the highlights. The entries (and the labels which accompany the paintings) are set out under three headings. Firstly, **BIOGRAPHICAL** information is provided about each artist. Then the **COMPANY'S ACTIVITIES** relevant to the year or period in which the work of art was created are outlined. Finally, where appropriate, the wider **CONTEXT** of either the subject or materials each art work is made from is discussed with reference to Laporte's development as a company.

The catalogue is arranged alphabetically by artist. The code number prefixed by L (or H in the case of works from the historic collection) is the Laporte collection accession number. The biographical entries are largely based on David Buckman's excellent *Dictionary of Artists in Britain since 1945*.

HARRY EPWORTH ALLEN 1894–1958

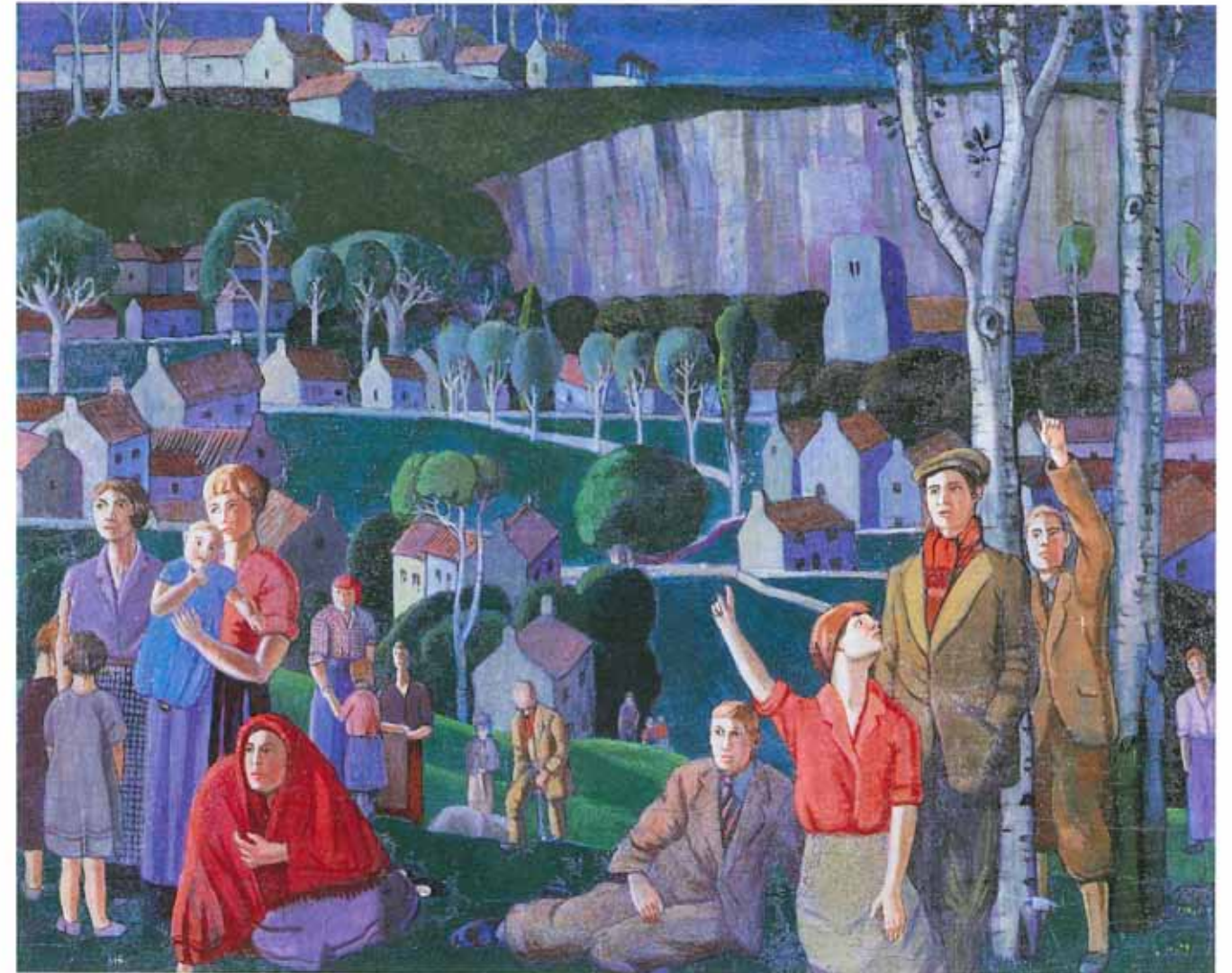
1 The Eclipse, c.1919

Oil on board · 13 x 16in / 33 x 40.7cm
L.52.98

ARTIST: Painter. Born in Sheffield, the son of a craftsman mask-maker, he was employed in Arthur Balfour's steelworks after leaving school. He fought and lost a leg in the First World War. He returned to Balfour's and became private secretary to Arthur Balfour, who was created the first Lord Riverdale in 1935. He began painting full-time in the 1930s and was associated with the 'School of Sheffield', a group of painters inspired by Ruskin's legacy to the city. Allen specialised in scenes of Derbyshire and his work is represented in several public collections.

LAPORTE IN 1919: Bradford in Yorkshire, to which the company returned in 1917 after the original closure in 1903, produced formic acid, much sought after by the textile trade for setting dyes in the dyeing process and enhancing the brightness of colour.

CONTEXT: The strange uni-directional light which occurs during an eclipse of the sun, enhances the vivid colours of the watcher's outer clothing. The stark limestone cliffs in the background, are a reminder of another branch of Laporte's operations – quarrying barytes in the carboniferous limestone of Westmorland.



MAXWELL ARMFIELD 1882–1972

ARTIST: Painter of figures and landscapes in tempera and watercolours; writer, illustrator and designer. He trained at Birmingham School of Art, in Paris and Italy. From 1908 he had regular solo exhibitions and showed at the RA, LG, NEAC and at London galleries and abroad. He became RWS in 1941 and an Hon Member in 1961. Whilst in America he was influenced by the theories of Jay Hambidge, and he also wrote many books including *Manual of Tempera Painting*, 1930. Influenced by the Pre-Raphaelites, the Symbolists and G.F. Watts, his early romantic and symbolic works used a finely brushed style. Later works reflected his study of oriental and Japanese art, the influence of Cezanne and Van Gogh and the designs of the American Indians.

LAPORTE IN THE 1930S: Early in the 1930s Laporte made its first assertive moves to expand beyond the boundaries of bleaches and laundry products. Primarily a soap and bleaching chemicals manufacturer, supplying cleansing agents to laundries and industrial concerns, the arrival in test amounts of a new compound, titanium dioxide, signalled a threat to the company's large market for barium sulphate. A by-product from hydrogen peroxide manufacture, barium sulphate, was used extensively as a filler in paint. Titanium dioxide proved better in every respect, much whiter and brighter and once available commercially would command a premium price. Much of the 1930s was occupied in the development, manufacture and subsequent marketing of titanium dioxide and by the end of the decade, Laporte had become one of the world's leading manufacturers of this innovative pigment.

CONTEXT: These largely abstract designs characterise the Art Deco style of the 1930s with strong geometrical patterns and stylised natural features. Art Deco was the defining style of the 1930s, influencing architecture, furniture and domestic artifacts of the period at every level.

2 **Autumn, Carpet Design, 1935**

Signed with monogram
Pencil, gouache & watercolour · 12 x 8¼in / 30 x 22cm
Provenance: Alexander Ballard
Exhibited: Raeburn Gallery, 1935; Southampton & Birmingham Art Galleries, 1978
Literature: *Homage to Maxwell Armfield*, Fine Art Society catalogue, 1970 L.70.983

3 **New Roses, Carpet Design, 1935**

Signed with monogram
Pencil, gouache & watercolour · 12 x 8¼in / 30 x 22cm
Provenance: Alexander Ballard
Exhibited: Raeburn Gallery, 1935; Southampton & Birmingham Art Galleries, 1978

4 **The Verdant Maze, Carpet Design, 1935**

Signed with monogram
Pencil, gouache & watercolour · 12 x 8¼in / 30 x 22cm
Provenance: Alexander Ballard
Exhibited: Raeburn Gallery, 1935; Southampton & Birmingham Art Galleries, 1978

5 **Earth Volcano, Carpet Design, 1935**

Signed with monogram
Pencil, gouache & watercolour · 12 x 8¼in / 30 x 22cm
Provenance: Alexander Ballard
Exhibited: Raeburn Gallery, 1935; Southampton & Birmingham Art Galleries, 1978

6 **Worcester Martelet, Carpet Design, 1935**

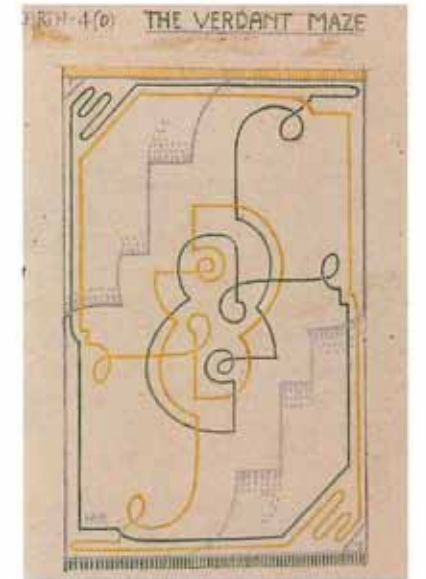
Signed with monogram
Pencil, gouache & watercolour · 12 x 8¼in / 30 x 22cm
Provenance: Alexander Ballard
Exhibited: Raeburn Gallery, 1935; Southampton & Birmingham Art Galleries, 1978



2



3



4



5



6

JOHN ARMSTRONG 1893–1973

7 *The Regatta, c.1950*

Oil on board · 16 x 24 in / 40.7 x 61 cm
L.51.98

ARTIST: Painter in oil and tempera, born in Hastings. After leaving Oxford, he attended St John's Wood Art School both before and after the First World War. He held his first solo exhibition in 1928 and also achieved recognition as an interior designer and as a set designer. He was an official war artist during the Second World War. During the 1950s he became interested in political themes. His paintings are mostly dreamlike and surreal. Several of his works are exhibited in major public collections including the Tate, the V&A and the Arts Council.



(24)

LAPORTE IN 1950: The long-awaited opening of the Warrington site – Baronet Works – took place on 29th March 1950. Outstanding features of the plant included emphatic brick cladding and barrel-curved roofs of reinforced concrete spanning 60ft without pillar support. The most advanced in the world for its technical design and configuration, the plant was also notable for its silence and almost aseptic cleanliness.

CONTEXT: Ships and boats of all types, dressed overall with signal flags, feature prominently at major sailing regattas such as Cowes Week. For day-to-day communications flags have long been replaced by radio and other electronic systems but in the past shipping arriving at East Coast ports such as Grimsby, would signal their requirements to G.D. Holmes. A Laporte company and specialist chandler and freight forwarder, which handles the shipment of the company's materials in and out of the ports, G.D. Holmes also services the needs of the ships and crews arriving there.

JOYCE BIDDER 1906–1999

10 *The Tackle, 1931*

Bronze · 15 in high / 38 cm
L.17.98

ARTIST: Sculptor and miniature painter born in Wimbledon. She attended Wimbledon College of Art and studied sculpture with S Nicholson Babb. Fellow of the Royal Society of British Sculptors; Member of the Royal Society of Miniature Painters, Sculptors and Engravers. Exhibited at the Royal Academy 1931–56.

LAPORTE IN 1931: Against a backdrop of political, social and financial upheaval in the early 1930s Laporte was forced to tackle some major business problems. Better and more economical processes required fewer operators and with sales under pressure employment levels had to be reduced.

CONTEXT: During this period many northern towns turned to their communities to make the sacrifices needed for their economic survival. This in turn engendered the strong community spirit which still characterises places like Warrington, Widnes, Rotherham and Castleford (towns where Laporte has strong manufacturing links) and which is exemplified by the tough resilience and spirit of the towns' rugby teams.



(25)

SIR FRANK BRANGWYN 1867–1956

ARTIST: Sir Frank Brangwyn was born in Bruges, the son of a Welsh architect. He received no formal art training but was encouraged by his father and obtained employment with William Morris making facsimiles of Flemish tapestries. His love of the sea and foreign travel led him to visit many countries. From 1890 he achieved quick success and was honoured by many foreign academies. In 1924 a retrospective exhibition of his work was opened by the Prime Minister of the day, Ramsay MacDonald. He was elected a Royal Academician in 1919 and knighted in 1941. He lived in Ditchling, Sussex.

Included in the Laporte collection of works by Brangwyn are designs from his two most famous murals cycles: the British Empire panels (1925–33) and the Rockefeller Centre (1930–34).

The Empire Panels were commissioned by Lord Iveagh for the House of Lords as a commemoration of the First World War. Although it took Brangwyn several years to complete it was ultimately rejected by the Lords, following an entire day's debate on the subject in the chamber; the final scheme was subsequently installed in the Brangwyn Hall, Swansea.

The commission for the Rockefeller Centre was given to Brangwyn after Picasso and Matisse had turned the commission down. Brangwyn painted four panels, each 17 x 25ft, on the subject of the Ascent of Man. For the preliminary sketches Brangwyn was paid \$300 and for the final paintings approximately \$25,000.

13 Aqueduct at Algeciras

Watercolour · 13½ x 18½in / 34.4 x 47cm
Provenance: Count William de Belleruche
L. 14.98

14 Fontainmore

Inscribed with title, watercolour · 11 x 15in / 28 x 38.1cm
Provenance: Count William de Belleruche
L. 13.98



13



14



15 Venice

Watercolour · 12½ x 9½in / 31.8 x 24.2cm
Provenance: Count William de Belleruche
L. 12.98

16 Red Indians; Study for The Empire Panels, c.1924

Watercolour and body colour over traces of pencils and chalk
14 x 14in / 35.6 x 35.6cm
Provenance: C.H. Bland Esq
Literature: The British Empire Panels, by Frank Rutter, 1933, reproduced plate I, p.47
L. 11.98

17 Study for The Gunners, c.1925

Gouache · 44 x 46in / 112 x 117cm
Exhibited: Fine Art Society, November 1953
Literature: Sir Frank Brangwyn R.A. – Studies for the British Empire
L. 15.98
Ill. p.28



18 The Chain Gang (Study for the Rockefeller Mural) c.1932

Gouache on board · 26½ x 24½in / 67.4 x 62.2cm
L. 63.98

LAPORTE IN 1932: The near-collapse of world financial institutions in the first years of the 1930s, including the suspension of the Gold Standard, brought about a world-wide programme of harsh economics, leading to mass unemployment and huge demonstrations. Despite the global recession, Laporte continued its pioneering development of titanium dioxide and, in 1932, constructed the first commercial plant in the UK.

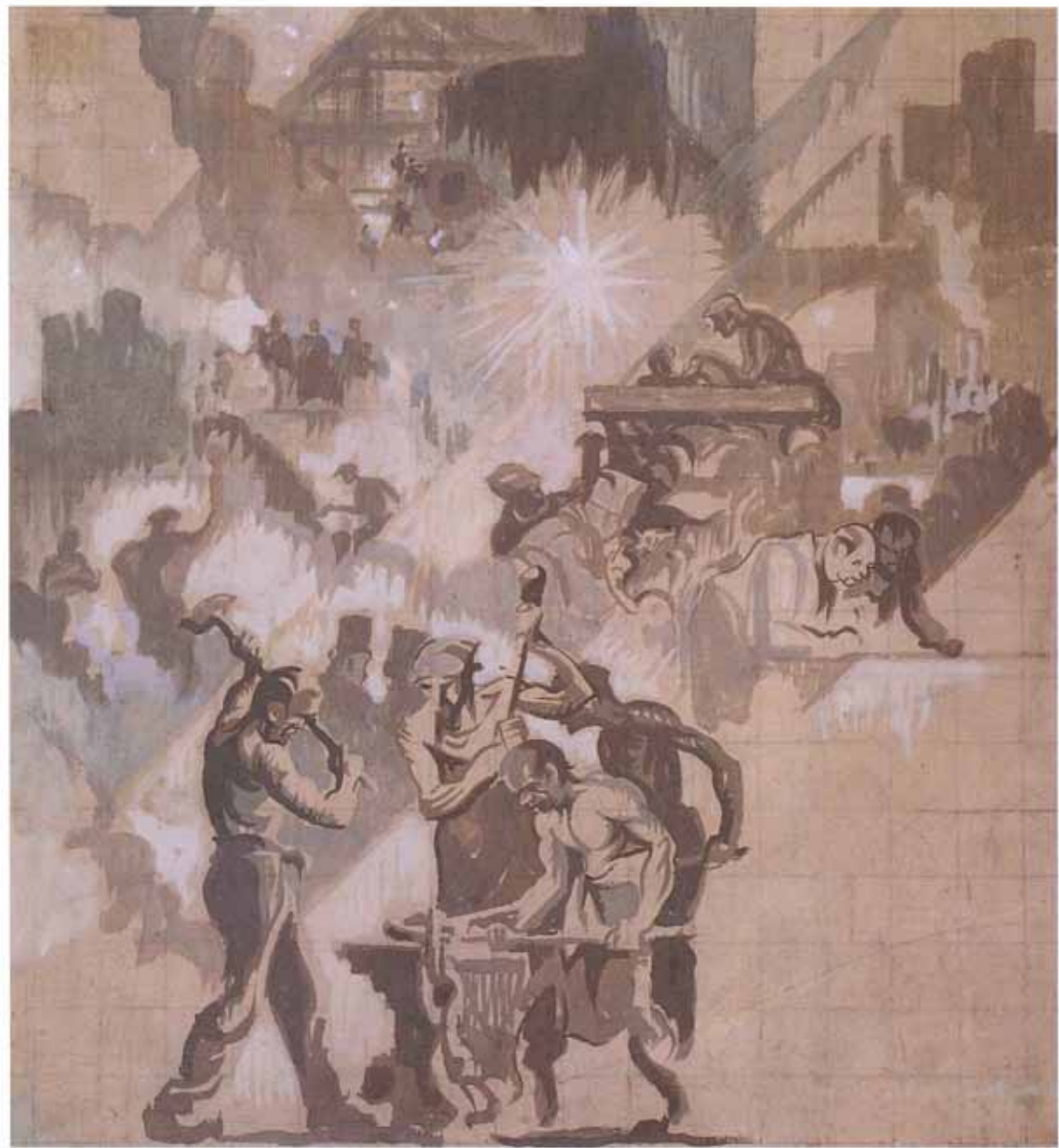
CONTEXT: The ductility of steel, here being fabricated into chain, depends on the inclusion of small quantities of trace elements, including sulphur. For many years Laporte manufactured Ferrous Sulphide, a compound of Iron and Sulphur, which was added to molten steel to provide its special qualities.

Ill. p.29

© David Brangwyn, Illustrations 13–18



17



18

PETER BROOK B.1927

ARTIST: A painter in oils, born at Holmfirth in Yorkshire. He studied at Huddersfield and Thanet Schools of Art, and at Goldsmiths' College. He taught for a period at Sowerby Bridge Grammar School, and exhibited regularly at the RA, the NEAC and the RBA. Living in Brighouse, much of his inspiration is drawn from the cities and landscapes of the industrial North. He has work in public collections in Great Britain (the V&A, Wakefield Art Gallery, Huddersfield Art Gallery, Leeds City Art Gallery) and abroad (in the USA, Switzerland, South Africa and Australia) as well as in many private collections.

20 *Dean Head Valley – a Powdering, c.1970*

Signed and inscribed with title
Oil on canvas · 19¼ x 23¾in / 49.5 x 59.7cm
£.54.98

21 *Stile in the country, c.1970*

Signed and inscribed with title
Oil on canvas · 24 x 19¼in / 61 x 50.3cm
£.55.98

22 *High on the Pennines, c.1970*

Signed and inscribed with title
Oil on canvas · 11¼ in x 11¼in / 29.9 x 29.9cm
Provenance: Agnew & Sons
£.68.98



20



22

LAPORTE IN 1970: 1970 saw a take-over bid for Laporte by Burmah Oil. The company was vulnerable with its financial resources stretched thin by the heavy capital expenditure on a new chloride plant for the manufacture of titanium dioxide at Stallingborough. In addition, around £2m of debenture stock was due for repayment. Collaboration with SOLVAY SA secured Laporte's future by creating a joint venture, Interlox, having great international market and manufacturing strength in peroxides. It also brought a major cash injection in the form of convertible loans to ease the cash flow problems and introduced a single, international chemical major as a powerful minority shareholder.

CONTEXT: The paintings depict typical northern Pennines landscapes, mostly wild fell land between 500 and 3,000ft above sea-level, over which sheep roam. Major deposits of barytes were found in such areas and worked by Laporte until the mid 1950s. Isolated and exposed as they were, fluorspar and barytes mines were reached by steep tracks across stone-walled fields. Sturdy, largely unskilled workers were drawn from the scattered villages in the neighbourhood. Given the isolated locations of many mines, houses were built for the skilled managers, miners and mechanics. Continuous ropeways crossed the fells transporting the ore to the mill-site and the railhead.



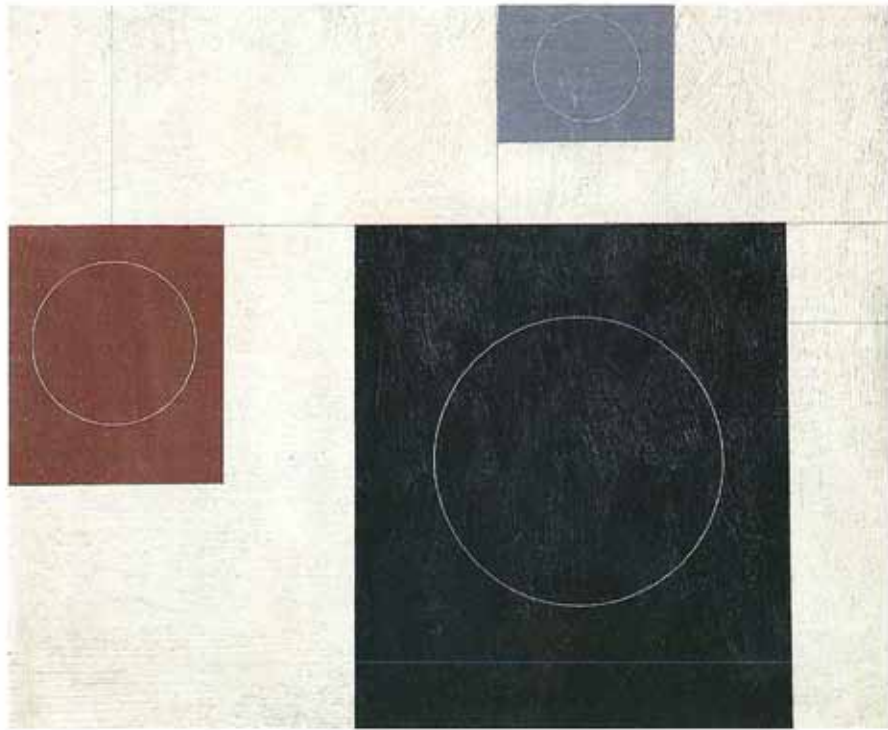
21

MICHAEL CANNEY 1923–1999

26 *Three Circles, 1964*

Signed and dated 64 verso
Oil on panel · 11 × 9¼ in / 28 × 23.5 cm
L.40.98

ARTIST: Painter of landscapes, coastal subjects, still life, portraits and abstracts in oils and alkyd; constructivist, collagist and maker of reliefs; broadcaster and writer on art. Born in Falmouth, between 1940 and 1942 he studied at Redruth and Penzance Schools of Art and at St Ives School of Painting. He met Nicholson, Hepworth, Gabo and Leach; between 1947 and 1951 he studied at Goldsmiths' College of Art. He subsequently studied at Hospitalfield, Arbroath, and worked with Denis Mitchell in St Ives. Secretary of Newlyn Society of Artists and Curator of Newlyn Art Gallery, 1956–64, in 1984 he settled in Italy. He has exhibited regularly in Cornwall, the provinces and



abroad and solo exhibitions include those at the Newlyn Art Gallery in 1983, and the Belgrave Gallery in 1990. His work is represented in collections including Plymouth Art Gallery. From 1965 to 1966 he was Gallery Director and Lecturer at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and from 1966 to 1983 he lectured at the West of England College of Art. His early figurative work showed the influence of Cubism and in the 1950s he started to make reliefs as his work became progressively more abstract. From the 1970s it was based on constructivist principles and on divisions of the square.

LAPORTE IN 1964: International investment in the manufacture of hydrogen peroxide using the revolutionary Laporte autoxidation process continued at a high level. Plants were opened in Brazil and Munich and an agreement signed to build a plant in South Africa. In Japan there were celebrations to mark the tenth anniversary of the construction of the plant there.

EBENEZER CRAWFORD

32 *Willy Wastle The Weaver, c.1880*

Signed · oil on canvas
10 × 8 in / 25.5 × 20.3 cm
L.45.98

ARTIST: London based genre painter of the late 19th century who exhibited widely in the capital.

BERNARD LAPORTE IN 1880: Born on 31st October 1862 in Hanover, Germany to Jean and Louise Laporte of Dusseldorf, Bernard Laporte was one of four children. In his teens he settled in Belgium as a representative of a German chemicals company and travelled not only on the Continent, but also frequently to Britain. In 1882, at the age of twenty, he settled in Yorkshire.

CONTEXT: Whilst the cotton industry had been fully mechanised by the late 19th century, the weaving of woollen cloth with its brightly contrasting colours was still largely a cottage industry. Particularly in Yorkshire, many families eked out a living from a small, foot operated hand-loom, often located in a dingy outbuilding to keep the noise down. With an emerging interest in textiles, this set Bernard thinking of ways to improve the quality and consistency of the cloth produced.



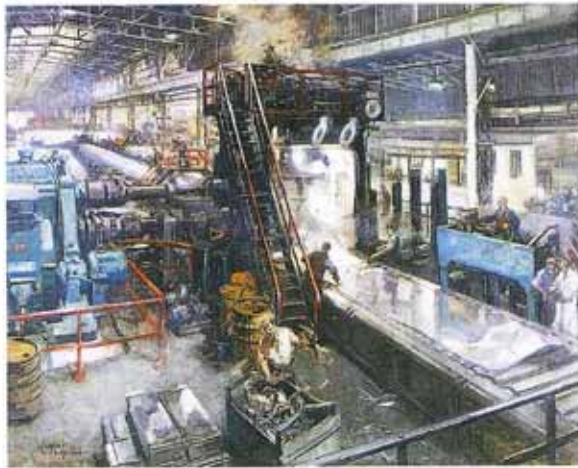
TERENCE CUNEO 1907–1996

33 Rolling Mill, 1944

Oil on canvas - 24 x 30in / 61 x 76.2cm
L.60.98

ARTIST: Terence Cuneo was a painter of portraits and of ceremonial, military and engineering subjects. Born in London, both his parents being artists, he studied at Chelsea and the Slade Schools of Art. He exhibited at the Royal Academy, Royal Institute of Oil Painters, the Royal Society of Portrait Painters, the Paris Salon, and held many one-man shows. He travelled widely in the Far East, Africa, Canada and the USA (where he worked with and painted cowboys) and was well-known for official portraits of HM The Queen, Edward Heath, Field Marshal Montgomery and other notables. He was a member of the War Artists' Advisory Committee during the Second World War.

LAPORTE IN 1944: As the Second World War neared its end, German V1 and V2 weapons brought terror to southern England. Incorporating high test peroxide in their launch and propulsion systems, the Government turned to Laporte to inspect the German production plants as they were overrun by the Allied armies. Subsequently Laporte advised on their disposal and relocation to the UK.



CONTEXT: Steel strip is the basis for a huge range of applications from tin cans to car bodies and the manufacture of cabinets for domestic items such as washing machines and refrigerators. In the 1980s Laporte supplied surface coating products to prevent the deterioration of steel strip through static, grease and rust.

34 Casting Factory, 1944

Oil on canvas - 24 x 30in / 61 x 76.2cm
L.61.98

LAPORTE IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR: By 1940 much of British industry was geared to the production of war materials. Laporte's major contribution was in the field of munitions with barium and strontium peroxide used in explosive, incendiary and pyrotechnic compositions and ammonium and potassium perchlorates used for tracer ammunition and flares.

CONTEXT: High grade steel castings such as those required for the breech blocks of Second World War guns, required a skilled work force equipped with the most advanced metal casting equipment. Modern foundries use a range of casting techniques including the use of casting sands mixed with bentonites to achieve a flaw-free polished finish.



ARTURO DI STEFANO B.1955

35 No 3 Bedford Square, 1999

Oil on canvas - 57 x 38 1/2in / 144.8 x 97.8cm
L.83.99

ARTIST: Born in Huddersfield, Arturo Di Stefano studied at Goldsmiths' College of Art, the Royal College of Art and the Accademia Albertina in Turin and now lives and works in London. He has held a number of one-man exhibitions in London, the provinces and overseas including Frankfurt, Florida and Turin. His work is represented in collections including the Art Council (Print) Collection, Chelsea & Westminster Hospital, Contemporary Art Society, Government Art Collection, Museum of London, National Portrait Gallery, Ferens Art Gallery, Hull, Leicestershire Museum and Art Gallery, University of Liverpool, the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool and the Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Preston. He is also represented in a number of corporate collections in London and New York.

LAPORTE: When Laporte's head office moved back to Luton in 1988, accommodation, consisting of small offices and meeting rooms, was also leased at 3 Bedford Square, London WC1 which meant that the Chairman, Company Secretary and their support staff could remain in the capital.



36 Hanover Square, 1999

Oil on canvas - 57 x 38in / 144.8 x 96.5cm
L.81.99

LAPORTE: By 1951 Laporte had become too big to be based 'out of town' and, for executives to gather from many parts of the world in one place, a London location was essential. So, on 1st July, the Registered Office moved to Hanover House, 14 Hanover Square, London W1.

Hanover House, seen on the right hand side, was built in 1900 combining street level shops and offices with apartments above. In the 1920s and 1930s it was particularly popular with theatrical people, including Sir Arthur Pinero, Dame Irene Vanbrugh and Sir James Barrie. Following severe bomb damage in 1940, the upper floors of the building were converted to offices after the Second World War.

37 Kingsway, Luton, 1999

Oil on canvas - 38 x 57in / 96.5 x 144.8cm
L.82.99

LAPORTE: Hanover House, to which Laporte had moved in 1951, was not a large building and, with continued administrative growth, non-vital office functions were soon transferred back to Luton. Even so, space for senior managers was at a premium and by 1987 it was clear that the company had out-grown its premises. There being no satisfactory London alternative and with the Kingway offices recently modernised and re-furnished, the head office moved back to Luton in May 1988 after a gap of 37 years.

38 Nations House, 1999

Oil on canvas - 60 x 66in / 152.4 x 167.6cm
L.84.99

LAPORTE: In 1995, Jim Leng, recently appointed as Laporte's Chief Executive, announced his intention to return the company's head office to London. After an extensive search a 15-year lease was signed providing the current accommodation on the two top floors of Nations House, a fully modernised prestige office block at 103 Wigmore Street, London W1. So, in September 1997, the company returned to London.



35



36



38

RICHARD EURICH 1903–1992

40 *The Long Barrow, c.1965*

Oil on canvas · 20 × 24in / 50.8 × 61cm
L.53.98

ARTIST: Painter of marine, coastal scenes, landscapes, figures and still life in oils. Born in Yorkshire, he studied at Bradford School of Art under H Butler 1920–4 and at the Slade School under Tonks 1924–6. Whilst at the Slade he concentrated on drawing and he was particularly influenced by the work of Turner as well as Cézanne, Constable and Durer. In 1929 he met Christopher Wood who influenced his painting, and Sir Edward Marsh who introduced him to Eric Gill. Through their interest he held his first solo exhibition of drawings in 1929. He also exhibited at the Royal Academy. From 1949 he taught at Camberwell School of Art and during the War he was an official War Artist with the Admiralty, recording the War at Sea. His work is represented in many public collections, including the Tate Gallery. His painting



was influenced by his knowledge of the Yorkshire coast and countryside, and whilst his drawings were very detailed and finished, his paintings used a broad technique.

LAPORTE IN 1965: 1965 was the year of the first major reorganisation of the Group's operations with the idea of making the marketing of Laporte products more efficient. Group trade was completely analysed and classified into market sectors and products arranged into three 'selling' divisions. Two, General Chemicals and Organics & Pigments, were UK-based and the third brought together the overseas businesses into one Overseas Division.

CONTEXT: This is a typical landscape of the period when the company was quarrying Fuller's Earth at Redhill, Surrey. Deep layers of red sand which overlay the thinner deposits of Fuller's Earth had to be stripped away before the clay could be worked. Sand from each day's operations was stacked and sold to the construction industry. Exhausted quarries were filled in and sympathetically restored to blend with adjoining topographical features such as this long barrow.

DAVID EVANS 1929–1988

41 *Cafeteria, 1975*

Signed
Watercolour on paper · 25½ × 38in / 64.8 × 96.5cm
L.62.98

ARTIST: Studied at the Central School of Arts and Crafts under Keith Vaughan. During his years in London he produced photomontages, designed a mural for the Soup Kitchen in Knightsbridge and a design for the Hollywood Room in the Observer Film Exhibition of 1956. He moved to Suffolk, became a watercolourist and worked in a tiny studio overlooking his vegetable garden. The somewhat predatory nature of his garden scenes suggest the influence of Edward Burra. He never lived off the proceeds of his sales but did part-time jobs, working for a period as a porter in a psychiatric unit and recreating his experience of this in hallucinatory images testifying to his patients' distress. He died in a road accident in 1988.

LAPORTE IN THE 1970S: The ninth decade was perhaps the most difficult and complex in the company's history. The quadrupling of oil prices in 1973 after the Yom Kippur War had threatened the very technological growth on which the company prided itself. The accepted tenets of the industrial society were being questioned – ecological balance, conservation, environmental concerns and social issues – while the media revolution had brought lively and influential issues into general public debate. Within Laporte emphasis was shifting from size and volume in technologically-led processes to greater added-value, specialisation, internationalism and innovation. The first seeds of the coming era of speciality chemicals were quietly being sown.



42 *The Ventriloquist Performs, 1975*

Signed
Watercolour on paper · 25½ × 38¼in / 64.8 × 98.5cm
L.37.98

LAPORTE AND ELECTRONICS: On the back of its work in the 1950s developing the electrolytic method for making hydrogen peroxide, a small laboratory was established to investigate the links between electronics and chemicals.

The early realisation that such different industries might be interdependent in the production of solid-state devices was a portent for the future. Larger laboratories were built in the 1960s and by the early 1970s the company had become a significant supplier of high purity inorganic and organic chemicals and photo-resists to the semiconductor industry. In 1982 Micro-Image Technology was acquired, a speciality company supplying more than 80% of the UK demand for such chemicals.

CONTEXT: For decades the entertainment industry had used amplified sound to bring artists closer to their audiences. With the arrival of the microchip in the early 1970s such miniaturisation was achievable that microphones and other electronic aids became almost invisible. Silicon wafers, the basis of all modern electronics with circuitry so fine that 100 lines are no thicker than a human hair, depend on ultrapure chemicals for their manufacture. Today, Laporte produces chemicals of such purity that not only are contaminants smaller than one tenth of a micron in diameter but within a given volume of product they are about as concentrated as a grain of sand in an Olympic swimming pool.



ERIC FRASER 1902–1983

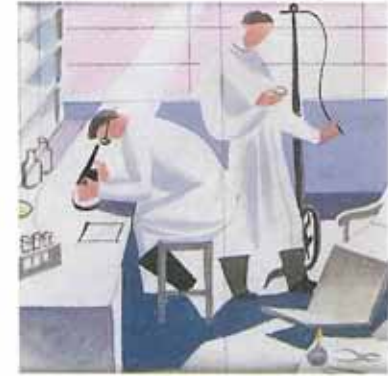
43 A collection of 28 designs, 1920–50

Gouache on paper
L. 19 (I-XXVIII) 98

ARTIST: A painter, lithographer and illustrator, Eric Fraser was born in London and studied at Westminster Institute attending evening classes under Walter Sickert. Later, he attended Goldsmiths' School of Art and from 1928–1940 taught at Camberwell School of Art. Working for the *Radio Times* from 1926 until his death and also for the Folio Society and for *Vogue*, his style is amongst the most recognisable of the graphic work of his generation. Fraser has been the subject of a book by Sylvia Backemeyer (*Eric Fraser, Designer and Illustrator*, published by Lund Humphries, 1998) and the subject of an exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1998.

LAPORTE IN THE 20TH CENTURY: Laporte has contributed greatly to the progress of technology in the 20th century. From the early use of hydrogen peroxide to bleach straw in straw hats, the company advanced in many directions including sanitisers and detergents for food hygiene, finings for beer clarification, bentonites for grouting in tunnels and other civil engineering projects.

CONTEXT: Contributions in the fields of inorganics, organics and electronics have led to major advances in many areas of technology. Industry, medicine, architecture and leisure pursuits have all gained from the innovative products and technologies developed by the company. Pigments, additives and adhesives have led to new construction methods and finishes for modern buildings, high purity chemicals have made possible the production of microchips and thus the computer revolution, and organic intermediates have made possible the new and advanced drugs for surgeons to fight disease. These and many other innovative improvements to people's lifestyles have been achieved through the creative endeavour of Laporte.



GERALD GARDINER 1902–1959

44 *St Aldhelm's Head, c.1940s*

Inscribed on reverse
Oil on canvas · 16 × 30in / 40.6 × 76.2cm
1.57.98

ARTIST: Landscape painter in oil. Born in London, he studied at Beckenham School of Art and at the Royal College of Art. He exhibited at the Royal Academy, the New English Art Club, the Royal Scottish Academy and in the provinces. During the Second World War he completed wall decorations for the Cheltenham Services Club. His works are noticeable for their translucent colour. He lived near Stroud, Gloucestershire.

LAPORTE IN 1940: The year that started as the 'Phoney' war ended with the 'Battle of Britain' and the start of unrelenting night-time bombing by German aircraft. The cost of the war led to steep increases in taxation, from 5s 6d in the £ in 1939 to 7s 0d by late 1939 and 7s 6d from April 1940. Cost of living payments increased and, as a patriotic duty, the company, along with many other firms, made up the wages of employees serving with HM Forces.

CONTEXT: *St Aldhelm's Head* on the Channel Coast, just west of Portland in Dorset, is a source of Portland Stone for the imposing facades of prestigious buildings. Laporte's move into building chemicals in 1980 was marked by the acquisition of Bio-Kil Laboratories, a Dorset-based company specialising in restoration, preservative and damp-proofing products.



CHARLES MARCH GERE 1869–1957

45 *The Italian entrance to the Simplon Pass, 1937*

Signed and dated, inscribed with title on label to reverse
Tempera on canvas board · 11 × 14in / 28 × 35.5cm
Exhibited: Leeds City Art Gallery, 1937(?); Royal Academy (no. 582?)
1.5.98

ARTIST: Charles March Gere was born in Gloucester and studied at the Birmingham School of Art and in Italy. A painter of landscapes, figure subjects and portraits he was, for a time, an illustrator for William Morris. He exhibited at the Royal Academy from 1890 and was a member of the New English Art Club and Royal Watercolour Society. His work is to be found in several public collections.

LAPORTE IN 1937: In 1937 Laporte was licensing its new electrolyte process for the production of hydrogen peroxide across Europe and beyond. Improvements in road and rail transport, supported with major engineering works such as these at the Simplon Pass, greatly eased movement across the Continent, making possible commercial access to previously remote areas.

CONTEXT: The concrete linings of many road and rail tunnels are consolidated with a grouting utilising bentonites supplied by Laporte.



GERTRUDE HARVEY 1886–1966

49 *Kitchen Still Life, c.1920*

Oil on canvas · 16 × 12½in / 40.7 × 32.4cm
1.65.98

ARTIST: Like her husband, Harold Harvey (see cover), Gertrude was a native of West Cornwall. Her first contact with art was as a model for Harold but later she decided to become a painter herself. She was mostly self-taught and painted flowers, landscapes and still-lives, becoming a successful artist in her own right. 'Gerr' exhibited at the Royal Academy between 1930 and 1949 and also showed her work at commercial galleries in London, sometimes with her husband. In one London exhibition which had a catalogue introduction by George Bernard Shaw, all her paintings were priced at five guineas. Every painting sold shortly after the exhibition opened. She had a reputation for good company and for being amusing and sharp witted. She outlived her husband by many years and died in St Just.

LAPORTE IN THE EARLY 1920S: The early 1920s were marked by the death of the company's founder, Bernard Laporte, at the age of 61 on 19th May 1924. Engaged in the day to day conduct of the business to within a few days of his death, his loss was deeply felt by the company and beyond. Bernard Laporte was the classic entrepreneur. His business, begun as a personal venture, had matured in 20 years to become a limited liability company by 1908. By the time of his death the company was an established world producer of peroxide products and had become the sole UK manufacturer of a range of barium chemicals.

CONTEXT: Possibly more than any other decorative art-form, china and porcelain give the average home owner the means of enjoying and displaying a wide variety of artistic expressions at modest cost. Pigments and glazes based on Laporte's products are used extensively in the production and decoration of china and porcelain.



TRISTRAM HILLIER 1905–1983

52 *Mud on the Road, 1980*

Signed and dated
Oil on canvas · 24 × 32in / 61 × 81.3cm
L.32.98

ARTIST: Tristram Hillier was born in Peking and educated at Christ's College, Cambridge. He first studied at the Slade and then Westminster School of Art. He was a painter of landscapes, marines, architectural scenes and still-life and was widely travelled, living for periods in France and Italy. He exhibited in Paris and London and his work is represented in many public collections. His early paintings reflect the influence of Matisse and Picasso. Later he evolved a personal interpretation of Surrealism and Cubism, modified by his interest in 15th century Italian and Flemish paintings.

LAPORTE IN 1980: 1980 saw the commencement of a radical reshaping of the company under a new management team. The Fuller's Earth operations were reshaped to fit them for a bigger and more specialised role. Uneconomic operations in Bath were shut down and new processing facilities constructed at Widnes. This allowed closure of obsolescent works at Redhill.

CONTEXT: Extracting the extensive deposits of Fuller's Earth in Redhill involved transport by heavy road vehicles between the adjacent quarries and the central processing plant at Nutfield. The slippery nature of Fuller's Earth could cause difficulties for drivers in wet weather and the worry of mud on the road was an ever pressing concern.



FELIX KELLY 1916–1994

57 *Gothic Lodge, Colliery Engine, c.1950*

Oil on canvas · 17 × 22in / 43.2 × 55.9cm
L.58.98

ARTIST: Painter of landscapes and architectural portraits in oils and gouache; book illustrator and stage designer. With no formal training, Kelly taught at Auckland Art School, before coming to London shortly before the Second World War. He travelled widely in Britain and the USA with trips to Russia and Thailand. He exhibited throughout the War in London whilst serving in the RAF and after the War had many one-man shows in London and New York. His landscape paintings are meticulous in execution, yet hold an air of enigma; a real building is often set in an imaginary landscape, sometimes with a mysterious figure passing by. His paintings have a narrative atmosphere and the precision of a photograph.

CONTEXT: Under the trade name 'Timborod' Laporte supplied the railways with short rods of a boron based preservative which were inserted into wooden sleepers and timber bridge supports to prolong their life. Limestone chippings, a by-product of Fluorspar quarrying in Derbyshire, is still supplied for use as track ballast. It was usual for large companies to have their own sidings, shunting engines and wagons to move goods into and out of their plants. Trains of wagons would be brought to a nearby marshalling yard where the company's own engines would take over. Laporte was no exception and there were major rail facilities at Kingsway to handle the large amounts of ore from its mine-workings in the Pennines, Derbyshire and Devon. Finished products were also despatched by rail.



SIR GERALD FESTUS KELLY, P.R.A.
1879–1972

59 Study for the State Portrait of King George VI,
c.1938–1944

Inscribed on the reverse in gouache, *The King XVIII* and in pencil part B.
Oil on canvas · 31 x 20in / 79 x 51cm
L.6.98

ARTIST: Sir Gerald Kelly was born in London and educated at Eton and Trinity Hall, Cambridge. He studied art in Paris.

A leading portrait painter who occasionally flirted with landscapes, he first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1909. Elected an Associate of the Royal Hibernian Academy in 1908, and of the Royal Academy in 1922, he rose to become President of the Royal Academy from 1949–54. Knighted in 1945, with the KCVO in 1955, he completed the State Portraits of the King and Queen in 1945.

LAPORTE IN 1938–1944: By 1938 Laporte had become the country's leading supplier of laundry products, used both domestically and commercially for bleaching and stain removing – these products had the benefit of preserving colours without damaging fibres.

CONTEXT: The reign of King George VI will always be closely associated with the conflict of the Second World War. During the War Laporte supplied phosphate-based aerating agents for domestic baking powders in response to the huge increase in home cooking – a result of food rationing – and perchlorate compounds for use in tracer ammunition.



DAME LAURA KNIGHT 1877–1970

60 The Coronation Route, 1953

Signed
Oil on canvas · 40 x 30in / 101.6 x 76.2cm
L.46.98

ARTIST: Painter of a wide range of subjects including landscapes, the circus, ballet, theatre, music-hall and gypsies. She was a War Artist during the Second World War. Media include oil, watercolour, pencil; also etchings and aquatints. She studied at Nottingham School of Art under Wilson Foster 1853–1924, with her future husband, Harold Knight. They moved to Staithes, Yorkshire, making frequent visits to Holland, then Cornwall, before settling in London in 1919. During the Second World War they lived in Malvern. She visited America (to serve on the jury of the International Exhibition at the Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh) in 1922 and again in 1927. She was a regular exhibitor at the Royal Academy from 1903.

CONTEXT: The Coronation in June 1953 was joyfully received by the British people as a fresh beginning following the rigours of the immediate post war years. National confidence improved and a healthy hunger for a higher standard of living developed. Indirectly titanium dioxide contributed to the emerging 'Consumer Society'. Its opacity and acid resistance made it ideal for white and pale vitreous enamel, linoleum, rubber, light-coloured plastics, ink, leather, ceramics, tiles, soaps and cosmetics. The ensuing consumer demand led to the high street boom of the 1950s which was epitomised in the 1957 aphorism, 'You've never had it so good'.



WINIFRED KNIGHTS 1899–1947

61 Goose Girl, 1918

Signed and dated

Watercolour and pen & ink · 11 x 7in / 28 x 17.8cm

Winifred Knights exhibition catalogue, The Fine Art Society and Paul Liss in association with the British School at Rome, 1995.

L.44.98

ARTIST: Decorative and landscape painter; draughtsman. Born in London, she studied at the Slade under Tonks and Brown, 1915–17 and 1918–20, winning the Slade Scholarship in Decorative Painting in 1920. She worked in Rome from 1920 to 1925 and married W.T. Monnington there in 1924. She exhibited at the Imperial Gallery from 1927 to 1931 and was a member of the NEAC from 1929–31. Represented in the Tate Gallery, *The Deluge*, 1920 and (*Italian Landscape*, 1921), her commissioned work included *St Martin Dividing His Cloak*, for the Milner Memorial Chapel, Canterbury Cathedral. Her meticulous draughtsmanship influenced Monnington's work.

LAPORTE IN 1918: By the end of the Great War Laporte was in a strong financial position. Capital, Preference, Ordinary and Deferred shares were fully covered by the company's liquid assets and dividends amounting to 32.5% on capital were being paid, though subject to a tax of 6 shillings in the pound on ready cash.

The company's strong feelings against this tax were expressed by the treasurer who, it is said, signed and crossed cheques with appropriate verses of which this is typical:

Dear Bankers, pay the undermentioned hounds
The shameful sum of seventy pounds.
By 'hound', of course, by custom one refers
To Special (Income Tax) Commissioners

CONTEXT: Straw hats, so much part of the attire of the pastoral community, were the basis for the initial success of Laporte, and were prized for their pale colour – a product of peroxide bleaching.



(48)

SIR THOMAS MONNINGTON 1902–1976

67 Design for the Conference Hall Ceiling, Council House, Bristol, 1953

Tempera over pencil on a gesso ground · 30 x 76in / 76.3 x 93.1cm

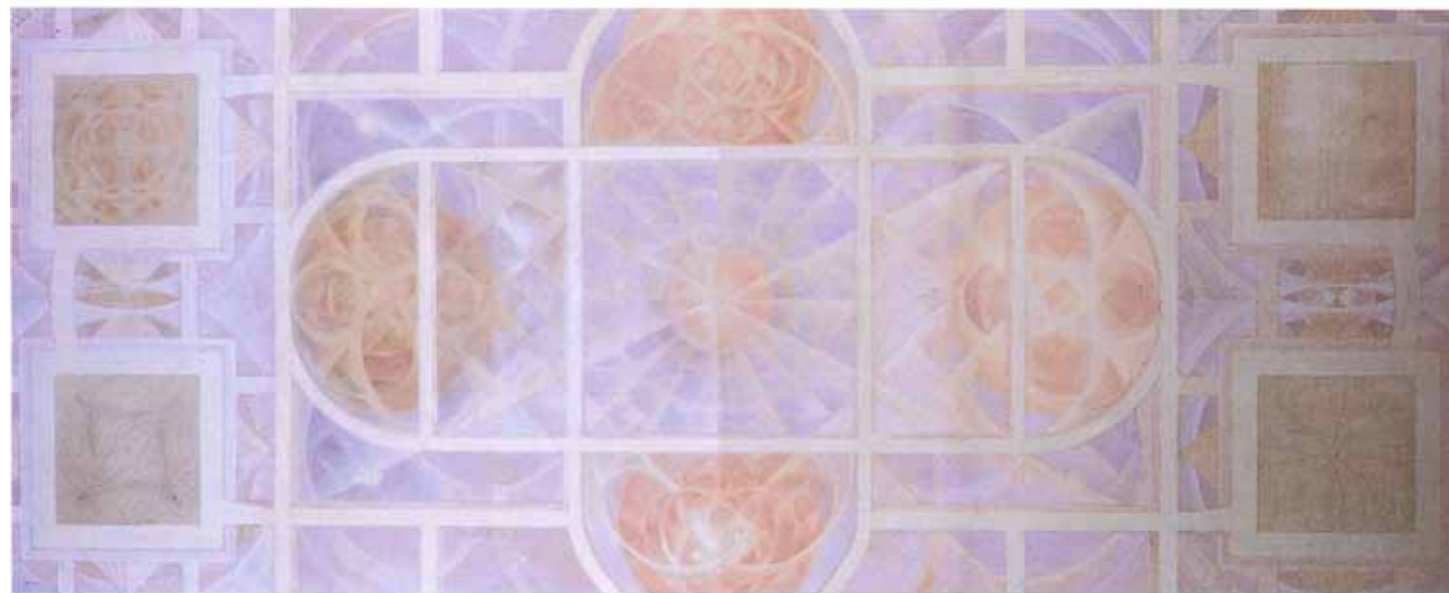
Provenance: The Artist's Estate

Exhibited: Royal Academy, 1956 (1174)

Literature: Thomas Monnington, The Fine Art Society, 1997, pp.21–2 and 53; repr. in colour p.32

L.9.98

ARTIST: Sir Thomas Monnington was born in London and studied at the Slade School of Art and later in Italy. Rome Scholar at the age of 21, he was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy at 29. Throughout his life he was beset by the firm belief that nothing of any value could, or should, be achieved without tremendous effort. The effect was to cause him to oscillate between periods of quiet elation and bursts of depression and



(49)

despondency about his abilities. This led to his gradual metamorphosis from a figurative painter to a creator of complex spatial design. The design for Bristol Council House was central to this development. He lived for much of his life in Leyswood, Groombridge, and was selected President of the Royal Academy in 1966.

LAPORTE IN 1953: The mid-1950s marked a peak in scientific research at Laporte with major R&D investment in the autoxidation process, a revolutionary new way for manufacturing hydrogen peroxide using an organic route. Today this is the process by which almost all hydrogen peroxide worldwide is manufactured.

CONTEXT: In his remarkable ceiling design for Bristol, Monnington set out to celebrate the scientific achievements of the mid-20th century. Each corner square represents the different disciplines of nuclear physics, electronics, aeronautics and biochemistry.

C.R.W. NEVINSON 1889–1946

68 *Portrait of Hannen Swaffer, 1938*

Signed
Oil on canvas · 43¼ × 32in / 110 × 81.5cm
L. 21.98

ARTIST: Painter of landscapes, urban and industrial subjects, war scenes, figure studies and flower paintings; an accomplished etcher and lithographer who worked in a variety of styles. He attended St John's Wood School of Art, the Slade School and the Académie Julian in Paris where he shared a studio with Modigliani, worked at the Cercle Russe and made friends with Severini. Interested in Cubism and Futurism, he was one of the first English artists to be deeply influenced by new developments in Europe at that time. He was a founder member of the London Group. He joined the RAMC in 1915 and was made an official War Artist in 1917. He was the first artist to draw from the air. His prints, with their bold contrasts and jagged forms marked a complete break with the Whistler tradition. His later work was gentler and less radical in design than his work before 1925.

LAPORTE IN 1938: In 1938, following the move into Australia two years earlier, a plant for the electrolytic production of hydrogen peroxide was established in Sydney.

A purpose-designed facility for the production of a range of pharmaceutical products was also constructed.

CONTEXT: Hannen Swaffer (1879–1962), "Swaff", was a journalist, editor and drama critic. During the first part of his career he worked for the *Daily Sketch* as Mr. Gossip, and the *Sunday Times*, as a contributor to *Plays and Players*. In 1926 he became the drama critic for the *Daily Express* from where he campaigned against the over-Americanisation of the stage and the press. In 1931 he joined the *Daily Herald*. Also known for his column in *Variety* and his work on the *Daily Mirror*, he was affectionately known as the *Pope of Fleet Street*.



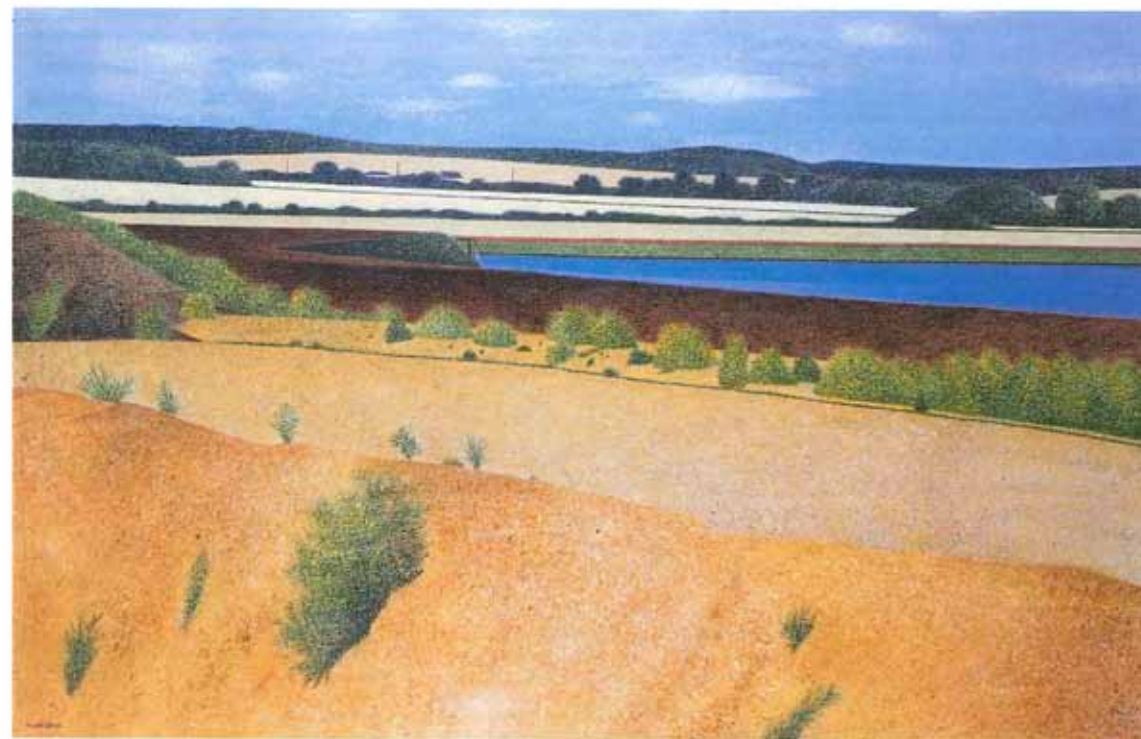
KEITH NEW B.1926

69 *Lake at the edge of a quarry – Clophill, Bedfordshire, 1998*

Pastel and acrylic · 40 × 61in / 101.6 × 154.9cm
L. 79.98

ARTIST: Keith New trained as a stained glass artist at the Royal College of Art and became a tutor in the College's Stained Glass Department. He then travelled to New York and worked for Steuben Glass. On his return, he became a tutor in the Industrial Design Department of the Central School of Arts in London and was then appointed Head of Foundation Studies at Kingston University. During the time he was teaching he was also painting and exhibited at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, the Glyndebourne Festival Opera Exhibition, the Hunting/Observer Art Prizes and the Llewellyn Alexander Gallery. From 1991 he has been painting full-time.

CONTEXT: For much of the company's history Laporte has extracted the minerals needed for production from quarries in rural parts of Britain. From the earliest days the company has been fully committed to the restoration of exhausted workings, returning the terrain to its original contours and to sympathetic replanting of the landscape with indigenous species of trees and other plants. The top half of New's painting shows a quarry site which has been restored by Laporte to farmland. The foreground, which shows the site still being worked, will be similarly restored when the quarrying is finished. The Fullers Earth extracted from Clophill is used for the manufacture of bentonites in oil well drilling and foundries.



SIR WILLIAM NICHOLSON 1872-1949

70 An Alphabet, 1898

Woodblock prints
each 9½ x 7½ in / 24 x 19 cm
L. 25 (I-XXVI) 98

ARTIST: William Nicholson was born at Newark-on-Trent and studied under Herkomer, 1888-89 and in Paris at the Académie Julian, 1889-90. Here he met James Pryde and married his sister Mabel. A painter in oils, well-known for still lifes, he executed a wide range of works, including portraits, flower pieces, landscapes and animal paintings, woodcuts, poster designs and stage sets.

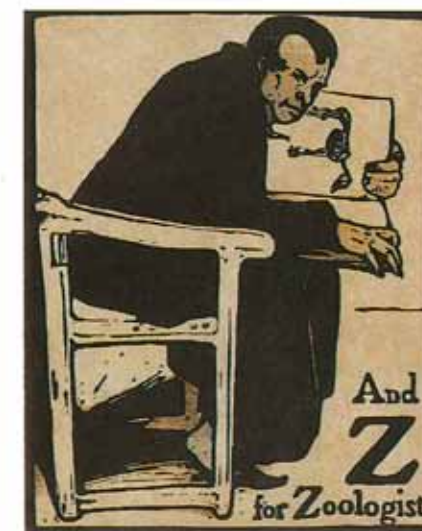
Working with Pryde as 'The Beggarstaff Brothers', he designed posters and other graphics and together they enjoyed great fame. He had colour woodcuts published by Heinemann between 1896 and 1900 and in 1904 designed the first stage sets for *Peter Pan*. But his greatest reputation was as a portraitist (he was founder member of the National Portrait Society). As his style matured during the 1920s, his assured, essentially Whistlerian style of close-toned colour gave way to the use of brighter colours.

LAPORTE: As the 20th century progressed, Laporte became increasingly prolific in the development of innovative products, expanding from its original operations in textiles, bleaching and laundering into numerous other areas. Many of the chemicals sold have been marketed under trade names and the company has scoured the alphabet and commercial dictionaries for suitably descriptive titles.

CONTEXT: The Laporte list of products and trade names covers every letter of the alphabet and offers a parallel alphabet to that of Nicholson's designs.

- A A is for the Artist
A is for Aluminium Sulphate
A is for Actal
- B B is for the Beggar
B is for Barytes
B is for Brebond
- C C is for the Countess
C is for Caprolactone
C is for Clearigate
- D D is for the Dandy
D is for Dichloracetone
D is for Dedshete
- E E is for the Earl
E is for Epoxides
E is for Evo-Stik
- F F is for the Flower Girl
F is for Ferrous Sulphate
F is for Fulacolor
- G G is for a Gentleman
G is for Glyoxal
G is for Genoxide
- H H is for the Huntsman
H is for Hydrofluoric Acid
H is for Howflex
- I I is for the Idiot
I is for Iron Oxide
I is for Isoclean
- J J is for the Jockey
J is for Jojoba Oil
J is for Jaycote
- K K is for the Keeper
K is for Ketone Peroxides
K is for Kleencare
- L L is for a Lady
L is for Lignocaine
L is for Laponite
- M M is for the Milkmaid
M is for Metallocenes
M is for Mapico

- N N is for a Nobleman
N is for Nitric Acid
N is for Nanostrip
- O O is for an Ostler
O is for Oxalyl Chloride
O is for Oxymaster
- P P is for a Publican
P is for Phthalic Anhydride
P is for Parabrite
- Q Q is for the Quaker
Q is for Quinine
Q is for Quatam
- R R is for a Robber
R is for Resins
R is for Raygel
- S S is for the Sportsman
S is for Sodium Perborate
S is for Smokeguard
- T T is for the Trumpeter
T is for Titanium Dioxide
T is for Truzone
- U U is for an Urchin
U is for Urea Hydrogen Peroxide
U is for Ultradet
- V V is for the Villain
V is for Vanadium Pentoxide
V is for Vynite
- W W is for a Waitress
W is for Water (ultrapure)
W is for Wallis
- X X is for a Xylographer
X is for Xylene
X is for Xerofen
- Y Y is for a Yokel
Y is for Yellow 42 (Iron Oxide)
Y is for Y42
- Z Z is for a Zoologist
Z is for Zeolites
Z is for Zeosorb



DAVID PARTRIDGE B. 1919

77 *Tumulus*, 1973

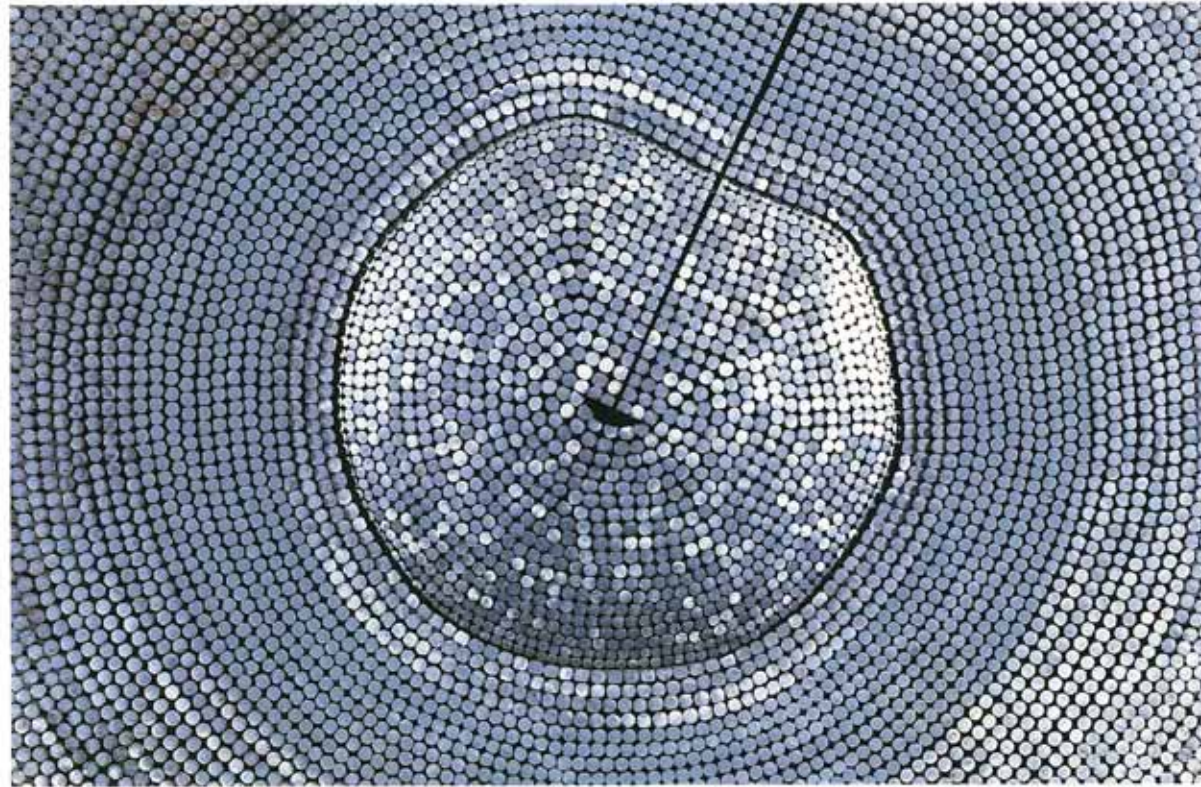
Nails on board · 25 × 37in / 63.5 × 94cm
L. 39.98

ARTIST: Painter, printmaker, sculptor and teacher notable for his creations using nails, which he termed nailies. Born in Akron, Ohio, he lived in England for seven years from 1928. Moved to Canada, becoming a Canadian citizen in 1944. He studied at the University of Toronto, 1938–41, served in Royal Canadian Air Force for four years; then attended University of Kingston. Studied painting variously in Canada, at Art Students' League of New York, at Slade School of Fine Art and at Atelier 17 in Paris. Taught in Canada 1958–61. Produced his first nail pieces in 1958 and in 1962 won the Montreal Spring Show sculpture prize. His

commissions included the roof restaurant at the Royal Garden Hotel, London, 1965 and murals for Toronto City Hall. Collections holding his work include the Tate Gallery, the V&A and the National Gallery in Ottawa.

LAPORTE IN 1973: 1973 was an outstanding year for the company with sales up 20%, exports up by 50% and profits at a record level. Investment was widespread across the Group with new plants being constructed in Portugal and Brazil and a plant extension in Japan.

CONTEXT: The widely-used process of galvanising – in which steel is coated with zinc to prevent rusting – requires the application of a Laporte flux to ensure the complete and intimate fusion of the two metals.



CHARLES PEARS 1873–1958

78 *Searchlight Practice*, 1940

Oil on panel · 20 × 14in / 50.8 × 35.6cm
L. 28.98

ARTIST: Charles Pears was born in Pontefract and educated at East Hardwick. A marine painter in oil, he exhibited at the RA, NEAC and in Paris. He was an official naval artist in both World Wars and his work is represented in several public collections. He lived in London and St Mawes, Cornwall, and illustrated a number of books, as well as designing posters.

LAPORTE IN 1940: In 1940, at the Government's request, Laporte began to manufacture ammonium and potassium perchlorates for urgent use in tracer ammunition and flares. Prior to its fall, France had been the sole source of these highly effective incendiary chemicals.

CONTEXT: Before the advent of Radar, gunnery engagements depended on visual sightings of the target for their success. In the Second World War powerful searchlights were used at night to seek out raiding aircraft. Tracer ammunition, for which Laporte manufactured potassium perchlorates, marked the trajectory of the defending anti-aircraft fire.



CHARLES SIMS 1873–1928

87 Arras, 1918

Oil on panel · 15 × 17½ in / 38.2 × 44.5 cm
L. 27.98

ARTIST: Painter of portraits, figures, landscapes and imaginative semi-abstracts in oils, tempera and watercolours; mural painter. He attended the Royal College of Art in 1890, the Académie Julian in 1891, and the Royal Academy Schools 1892–5, where he won the Landseer Scholarship. He exhibited at the RA from 1893 and held his first solo exhibition at the Leicester Galleries, in 1906. He subsequently exhibited at the Royal Society of Painters in Watercolour and Barbizon House. He also won gold medals in Amsterdam and Pittsburgh. He was elected ROI in 1904, RWS in 1914, RA in 1916 and RSW in 1926 and two of his paintings were purchased by the Chantrey Bequest in 1908 and 1913. In 1918 he was a War Artist in France and between 1920 and 1926 he was Keeper of the RA Schools. He took his own life in 1928. His work ranges from early outdoor figure scenes painted with a light, fluent touch to formal portraits and paintings where he adopted a symbolist or primitive style.

LAPORTE 1914–18: World War I brought major changes to Laporte as traditional sources of essential raw materials were cut off by the military conflict. New processes had to be developed quickly, utilising indigenous reserves, so that production could be maintained. In addition, because so many men were needed for the Allied Armies, women workers were taken on for the first time to replace them.

CONTEXT: Many company employees served in France during World War I. One, Bill Piggott became Company Secretary in 1922 and held this office until 1949, being appointed a director in 1944. His total service with the company was a record 52 years. Many of the men from Laporte who volunteered for service were drafted into the Bedfordshire Regiment which suffered severely in the Gallipoli Campaign of 1915.



AUSTIN OSMAN SPARE 1888–1956

89 *Redundant Isle, 1947*

Signed, dated and inscribed with title
Oil on board · 9 x 12in / 22.9 x 30.5cm
L.41.98

ARTIST: Painter and illustrator. Born at Smithfield, he studied art at Lambeth and at the Royal College of Art. Exhibited at the Royal Academy and also had several one-man shows. He was editor of the magazines *Form* and *Golden Hind*, and also wrote some twenty books on the occult. Lived alone in Brixton towards the end of his life, drawing local types and holding exhibitions in pubs in the working class districts of London. Painted portraits and figure compositions, also etched and drew. His esoteric symbolism and grotesque imagery makes him a minor cult figure. During the Second World War he was injured and lost the use of both arms.



LAPORTE IN 1947: The Group's foreign-based businesses suffered during the Second World War because of communications and transport difficulties. Crystal-Laporte, the Australian manufacturing company soldiered on although specialist spares, such as platinum anodes and ceramic diaphragms, were almost unobtainable. After the war, mainstream production was re-established and this, coupled with new investment and fresh management, enabled the sales network to be rebuilt and markets recovered.

CONTEXT: Easter Island, world renowned for its stone statues and exotic reptilian wildlife, is administered today by the Chilean government. Laporte's interests in South America, dating from 1941, include an affiliate company founded in 1977 to supply mining chemicals to the global Chilean copper mining industry. Such chemicals, when reacted with the crude copper ore provide an efficient means of extracting the valuable elemental copper.

HUMPHREY SPENDER B. 1910

90 *Traffic Landscape, c.1965*

Oil on panel · 15½ x 22in / 39.5 x 56cm
L.50.98

ARTIST: Painter of landscapes and still lifes in oils, watercolours and gouache; photographer, muralist and designer. He studied architecture at the Architectural Association under Howard Robertson 1929–34, and from 1935–41 and 1946–56 worked as a documentary photographer and photo-journalist for the *Daily Mirror* and *Picture Post*. Official photographer for the 'Mass Observation' scheme and for the War Office, he exhibited at the Royal Academy, in London galleries, in the provinces and abroad. From 1956–76 he was Tutor in the Textile Department of the Royal College of Art and he has won four Industrial Design awards. His work includes murals for the Festival of Britain and the P&O Line,

photographs of urban life, and paintings ranging from stylised still life to surrealistic images.

LAPORTE IN 1965: With business expanding rapidly both sales and profit were at record levels. Widnes was one site to benefit from the strong flow of capital investment with the introduction of Molecular Sieves. Performing a vital role in the refining of petrol to achieve higher octane ratings, they contributed to the improvements in reliability and efficiency of car engines. Molecular sieves were to become a mainstay product of the company for the next 25 years.

CONTEXT: Traffic information and control, originally managed by simple kerbside signs, has inevitably evolved with the huge growth in car usage. Today it includes illuminated overhead signs, electronic messages and strongly coloured road-markings, the latter depending on inorganic pigments produced by Laporte.



JAMES TARR 1905–1996

92 Painting Tents, 1952

Signed and dated
Gouache on paper - 12 x 10 in / 30 x 25.5 cm
L. 20.98

ARTIST: James Tarr was born in Wales and painted in oil and watercolour. He studied at the Cheltenham School of Art 1922–25 and at the RCA 1925–29. An exhibitor at the RA and elsewhere, he was Principal successively of Lydney, High Wycombe and Cardiff Schools and Colleges of Art. He is known for his rural landscapes which are carefully and rhythmically composed in harmonious colours.

LAPORTE IN THE EARLY 1950s: By 1950 demand for Laporte's titanium dioxide, the principal filler in modern paint, was so great that production was transferred from Kingsway, Luton to Stallingborough on the Humber Estuary where, on 19th July 1951 Battery Works was born.

CONTEXT: The development of modern fillers and pigments, both historic products of Laporte, has been a major contribution to the success of today's high quality, non-toxic and colourful paints.



DAVID TINDLE B. 1932

96 Still Life with fish, 1957

Signed and dated
Oil on canvas
40 x 30 in / 101.6 x 76.2 cm
L. 49.98

ARTIST: Painter of landscapes, interiors, still-life figures and portraits, in tempera, oils and watercolours. He studied at Coventry School of Art 1945–7. He has shown at the RA (becoming ARA in 1973 and RA in 1979), abroad and in the provinces. His work is represented in public collections including the Tate Gallery and the Arts Council Collections. Between 1959 and 1974 he taught at Hornsey College of Art and from 1972–1983 at the Royal College of Art. In 1986 he became Ruskin Master at Oxford University.

LAPORTE IN 1957: Unusually for a chemical company, Laporte went prospecting in Nyasaland (now Malawi) in 1957 seeking and appraising deposits of ilmenite, first discovered there in 1906, as a source of titaniferous ore. A team of nine chemists and geologists was involved but the survey merely proved the negative and was closed down in 1960.

CONTEXT: Dried swim bladders from certain species of edible fresh water fish are processed by Laporte into a pure flocculating powder, used as finings in the clarification of beer.



JOHN TUNNARD 1900–1971

97 *In Many Moons*, 1966

Signed and dated
Oil on board - 60 x 48in / 152.4 x 122cm
L.33.98

ARTIST: John Tunnard, a painter of abstracts, landscapes and marines, studied at the Royal College of Art 1919–23, and worked as a textile designer until 1929, when he started to paint. Visiting Cornwall 1930–32, he moved there in 1933 becoming a successful local artist and, from 1948, a teacher in design at the Penzance School of Art. Dividing his time between London and Cornwall he first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1931, then regularly in various London galleries and later abroad. He also taught part time at the Central School of Art.

His early work consisted mainly of romantic Cornish landscapes which were executed in a vigorous rhythmic manner. During the 1930s he experimented in abstraction, constructivism and surrealism. His 1940s work reflected the impact of technology, and in the 1960s the exploration of space. He was made an ARA in 1967.

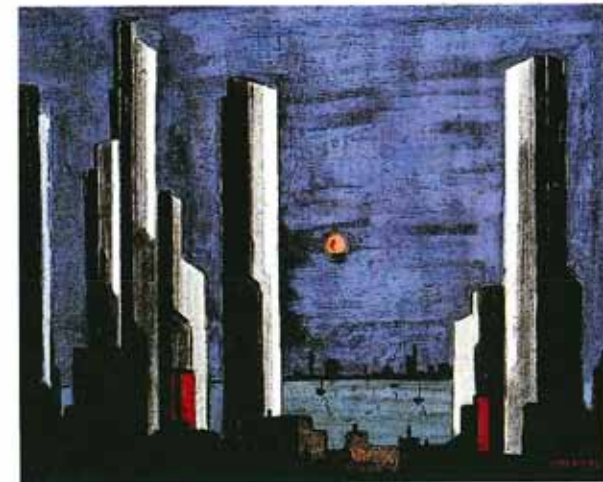
LAPORTE IN 1966: By 1966 advances in technology were having a major impact on the development of new products and processes at Laporte. No less than 20% of Group turnover was attributable to the paint industry as a result of its success in titanium dioxide and phthalic anhydride manufacture. Chemicals were being developed for the emerging printed circuit board and synthetic fibres industries and, with world production of plastics doubling every five years, major investment was being directed towards the production of resins and plasticisers.

CONTEXT: Images of space predominate in this painting which was executed during a period of intensive interest in experimental space flight. The energy contained in high test peroxide made it a potential oxidant for early rocket fuels and Laporte made an important contribution to this programme.

FRED UHLMAN 1901–1985

98 *Manhattan at Night*, 1962

Signed
Oil on canvas board - 16 x 20in / 40.6 x 50.8cm
L.42.98

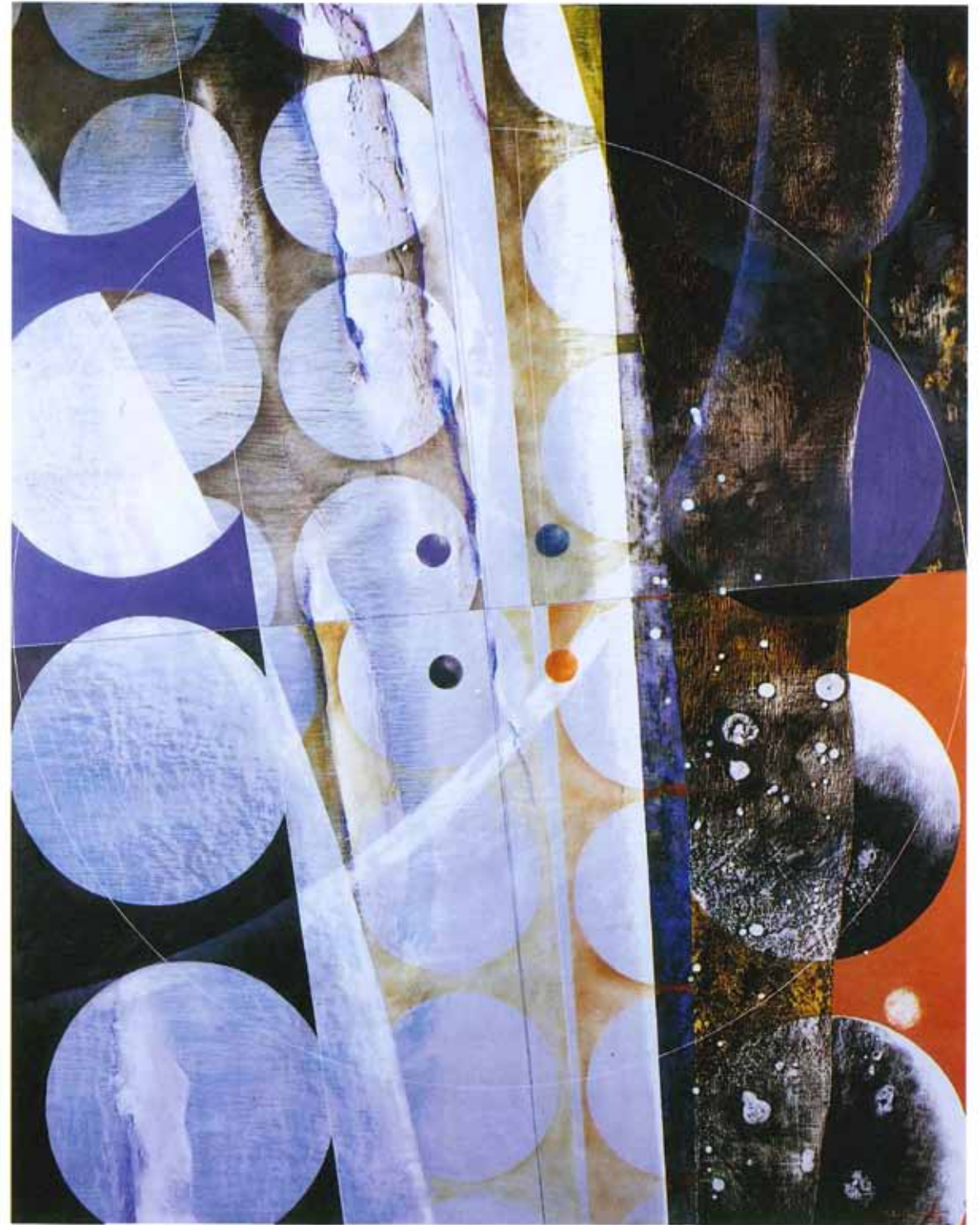


98

ARTIST: Painter of landscapes, townscapes and marines in oils. Born in Stuttgart, he studied law and from 1927 to 1933 practised as a lawyer. In 1933 he was a refugee in Paris and he taught himself to paint. Recognised by the critic Wertheim he held solo exhibitions in Paris in 1936, 1937 and 1938 and showed at the Salon d'Automne and the Salon des Indépendants. In 1936 he settled in England. His delicately handled paintings combine naiveté with an accomplished technique and intensity of imagery.

LAPORTE IN 1962: Financially, 1962 was disappointing with a 22% decline in profits due to difficult trading, excess industry capacity and intense competition from Europe. Despite this, long-term prospects were encouraging, particularly in the development of activated earths. One of the most versatile products of this research, a synthetic swelling hectorite with exceptional thixotropic properties was patented. Given the trade name *Laponite*, it is now widely used in paint, cosmetics and household products.

CONTEXT: The skyscrapers of Manhattan have long beckoned businessmen from across the world. But it was not until 1977 that Laporte established a permanent presence in the USA with a liaison office on the outskirts of New York, reflecting the growing importance of the company's business with the New World.



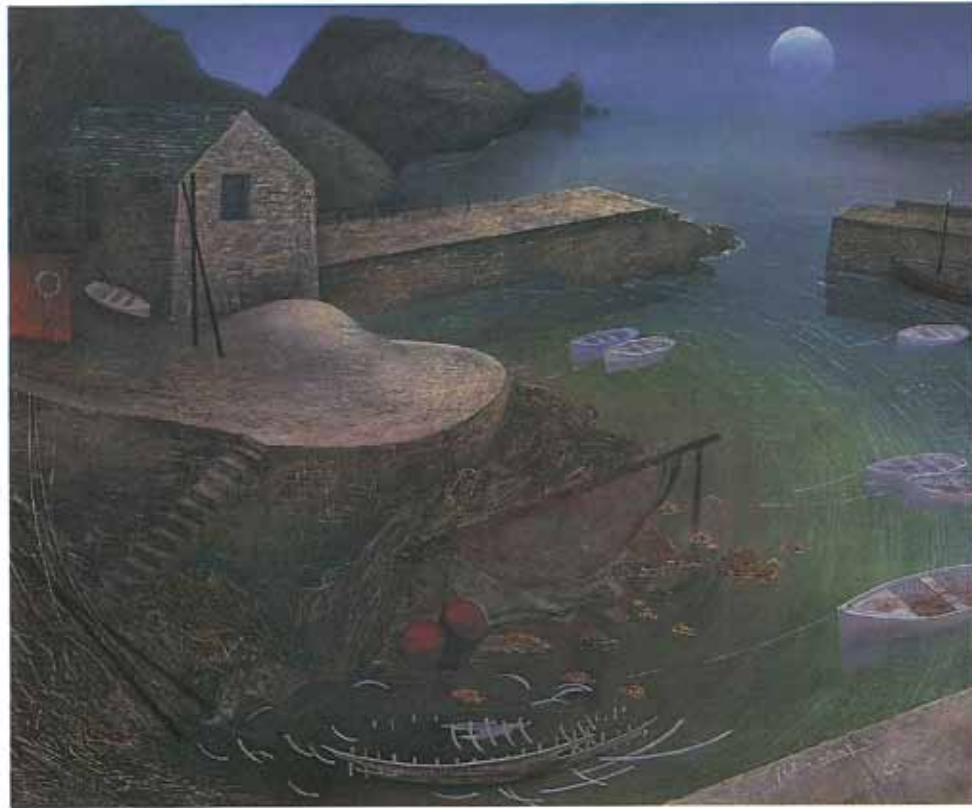
97

J. COBURN WITHEROP 1906–1984

101 Moon over Mullion, 1953

Signed, dated and inscribed with title
Tempera on board · 27 x 33in / 68.5 x 84cm
Exhibited: Liverpool Academy of Arts, 1954
L.7.98

ARTIST: Coburn Witherop lived in Liverpool, a painter and engraver of landscape, river and coastal scenes and architectural subjects. He studied at Liverpool College of Art and at the Royal College of Art under Rothenstein and Osborne. He exhibited at the Royal Academy, in the provinces and abroad. He was elected to the Royal Cambrian Academy in 1946.



LAPORTE IN 1953: In February a North Sea tidal rise of 32ft, coupled with strong on-shore winds overwhelmed the sea defences of much of the East Coast resulting in thousands of acres being flooded. Vital construction of the new £2.5m Titanium dioxide plant at Stallingborough was halted as seawater swept into the boiler house and sub-station. Despite the set back, the first commercial consignment of titanium dioxide was shipped to the Empire Paper Mills, Dartford, Kent in July.

CONTEXT: As well as painting Witherop worked as a picture restorer. Since the early 1950s a resin varnish developed by Laporte and sold under the trade name of MS2A, has found great favour with restorer's because of its resistance to cracking and colour fastness over very long periods of time.

Complete Catalogue of the Laporte Collection

AT 1 JANUARY 2000

HARRY EPWORTH ALLEN
1894–1958

1 The Eclipse, c.1919

Oil on board · 13 x 16in / 33 x 40.7cm
L.52.98 ILLUSTRATED P.21

MAXWELL ARMFIELD
1882–1972

2 Autumn, Carpet Design, 1935

Signed with monogram
Pencil, gouache & watercolour · 12 x 8½in / 30 x 22cm
Provenance: Alexander Ballard
Exhibited: Raeburn Gallery, 1935; Southampton & Birmingham Art Galleries, 1978
Literature: *Homage to Maxwell Armfield*, Fine Art Society catalogue, 1970
L.70.98 ILLUSTRATED P.23

3 New Roses, Carpet Design, 1935

Signed with monogram
Pencil, gouache & watercolour · 12 x 8½in / 30 x 22cm
Provenance: Alexander Ballard
Exhibited: Raeburn Gallery, 1935; Southampton & Birmingham Art Galleries, 1978
Literature: *Homage to Maxwell Armfield*, Fine Art Society catalogue, 1970
L.71.98 ILLUSTRATED P.23

4 The Verdant Maze, Carpet Design, 1935

Signed with monogram
Pencil, gouache & watercolour · 12 x 8½in / 30 x 22cm
Provenance: Alexander Ballard
Exhibited: Raeburn Gallery, 1935; Southampton & Birmingham Art Galleries, 1978
Literature: *Homage to Maxwell Armfield*, Fine Art Society catalogue, 1970
L.72.98 ILLUSTRATED P.23

5 Earth Volcano, Carpet Design, 1935

Signed with monogram
Pencil, gouache & watercolour · 12 x 8½in / 30 x 22cm
Provenance: Alexander Ballard
Exhibited: Raeburn Gallery, 1935; Southampton & Birmingham Art Galleries, 1978
Literature: *Homage to Maxwell Armfield*, Fine Art Society catalogue, 1970
L.73.98 ILLUSTRATED P.23

6 Worcester Martelet, Carpet Design, 1935

Signed with monogram
Pencil, gouache & watercolour · 12 x 8½in / 30 x 22cm
Provenance: Alexander Ballard
Exhibited: Raeburn Gallery, 1935; Southampton & Birmingham Art Galleries, 1978
Literature: *Homage to Maxwell Armfield*, Fine Art Society catalogue, 1970
L.74.98 ILLUSTRATED P.23

JOHN ARMSTRONG 1893–1973

7 The Regatta, c.1950

Oil on board · 16 x 24in / 40.7 x 61cm
L.51.98 ILLUSTRATED P.24

JOHN BARTON
Fl. 1960s

8 Drawings recording Laporte's industrial activities, c.1961

Black crayon · 21 x 15in / 53.4 x 38.2cm
H.4 (1–111)

HENRY MAYO BATEMAN
1887–1970

9 The Man who doubted if Howards' Aspirin was the Best

Watercolour · 15 x 22in / 38 x 56cm
L.91.99

JOYCE BIDDER
1906–1999

10 The Tackle, 1931

Bronze · 15in high / 38cm
L.17.98 ILLUSTRATED P.25

- LESLIE BLANCHE B. 1904
- 11 **Eleven Illustrations to the Poems of Jonathan Swift, c.1950**
Jonathan Swift; Midas; Cadenus and Vanessa; Stella; A beautiful Young Nymph Going To Bed; The Dean is Dead and what is Trumps; The South Sea Project; BIT; The Legion Club; Mrs Francis Harris's Petition; Strephon and Chloe
Coloured ink and crayon · 19½ × 15in / 49.5 × 38.2cm
L.10 (1-X1) 98
- DOUGLAS PERCY BLISS 1900-1984
- 12 **Railway Bridges at Blackheath, 1932**
Oil on board · 20 × 30in / 50.8 × 76.2cm
L.36.98
- SIR FRANK BRANGWYN 1867-1956
- 13 **Aqueduct at Algeciras**
Watercolour · 13½ × 18½in / 34.4 × 47cm
Provenance: Count William de Belleruche, Private
L.14.98 ILLUSTRATED P.26
- 14 **Fontainmore**
Inscribed with title
Watercolour · 11 × 15in / 28 × 38.1cm
Provenance: Count William de Belleruche, Private
L.13.98 ILLUSTRATED P.26
- 15 **Venice**
Watercolour · 12½ × 9½in / 31.8 × 24.2cm
Provenance: Count William de Belleruche, Private
L.12.98 ILLUSTRATED P.27
- 16 **Red Indians; Study for The Empire Panels, c.1924**
Watercolour and body colour over traces of pencils and chalk · 14 × 14in / 35.6 × 35.6cm
Provenance: C.H. Bland Esq
Literature: The British Empire Panels, by Frank Rutter, 1933, reproduced plate I, p.47.
L.11.98 ILLUSTRATED P.27
- 17 **Study for The Gunners, c.1925**
Gouache · 44 × 46in / 112 × 117cm
Exhibited: Fine Art Society, November 1953
Literature: Sir Frank Brangwyn R.A. - Studies for the British Empire
L.15.98 ILLUSTRATED P.28
- 18 **The Chain Gang (Study for the Rockefeller Mural), c.1932**
Gouache on board · 26½ × 24½in / 67.4 × 62.2cm
L.63.98 ILLUSTRATED P.29
- PETER BRANNAN 1926-1995
- 19 **Northern Street Scene, 1967**
Signed and dated
Oil on panel · 12 × 9½in / 30.5 × 23.5cm
L.34.98
- PETER BROOK B. 1927
- 20 **Dean Head Valley - a Powdering, c.1970**
Oil on canvas · 19½ × 23¼in / 49.5 × 59.7cm
L.54.98 ILLUSTRATED P.30
- 21 **Stile in the Country, c.1970**
Oil on canvas · 24 × 19¼in / 61 × 50.3cm
L.55.98 ILLUSTRATED P.31
- 22 **High on the Pennines c.1970**
Signed and inscribed with title
Oil on canvas · 11¾ × 11¾in / 29.9 × 29.9cm
Provenance: Agnew & Sons
L.68.98 ILLUSTRATED P.30
- 23 **Pennine Hill Farm c.1970**
Signed and inscribed with title
Oil on canvas · 11¼ × 11¾in / 29.9 × 29.9cm
Provenance: Agnew & Sons
L.69.98
- WALTER HERBERT CAMM 1881-1967
- 24 **Flying Dutchman, c.1914**
Cartoon for stained glass windows in Midfield, Midlothian
watercolour · 34 × 40in / 86.4 × 101.6cm
L.77.98
- 25 **Tournament c.1914**
Cartoon for stained glass windows in Midfield, Midlothian
Watercolour · 34 × 40in / 86.4 × 101.6cm
L.78.98
- MICHAEL CANNEY 1923-1999
- 26 **Three Circles, 1964**
Signed and dated 64 verso
Oil on panel · 11 × 9½in / 28 × 23.5cm
L.40.98 ILLUSTRATED P.32
- ROY CONN B. 1931
- 27 **Geometric Composition, 1953**
Oil on board · 10 × 14in / 25.4 × 35.6cm
L.67.98
- RICHARD CONSTABLE B. 1932
- 28 **Winter scene with Trees, 1968**
Signed and dated Oct 4th 1968
Gouache · 19½ × 26½in / 49 × 66.5cm
L.22.98
- 29 **Morning Light, 1968**
Signed and dated Oct 4th 1968
Gouache · 13½ × 20½in / 34.5 × 52cm
L.23.98
- CLAUDE OLIVER JAMES COOK RIBA
- 30 **Architectural Design, c.1920**
Watercolour and pencil · 20 × 30in / 50.9 × 76.2cm
L.85.99
- 31 **Architectural Design**
Watercolour and pencil · 20 × 30in / 50.9 × 76.2cm
L.86.99
- EBENEZER CRAWFORD
- 32 **Willy Wastle The Weaver, c.1880**
Signed
Oil on canvas · 10 × 8in / 25.5 × 20.3cm
L.45.98 ILLUSTRATED P.33
- TERENCE CUNEO 1907-1996
- 33 **Rolling Mill, 1944**
Oil on canvas · 24 × 30in / 61 × 76.2cm
L.60.98 ILLUSTRATED P.34
- 34 **Casting Factory, 1944**
Oil on canvas · 24 × 30in / 61 × 76.2cm
L.61.98 ILLUSTRATED P.34
- ARTURO DI STEFANO B. 1955
- 35 **No 3 Bedford Square, 1999**
Oil on canvas · 57 × 38½ / 144.8 × 97.8cm
L.83.99 ILLUSTRATED P.36
- 36 **Hanover Square, 1999**
Oil on canvas · 57 × 38in / 144.8 × 96.5cm
L.81.99 ILLUSTRATED P.36
- 37 **Kingsway, Luton, 1999**
Oil on canvas · 38 × 57in / 96.5 × 144.8cm
L.82.99 ILLUSTRATED P.35 (detail)
- 38 **Nations House, 1999**
Oil on canvas · 60 × 66in / 152.4 × 167.6cm
L.84.99 ILLUSTRATED P.37
- SIR ALFRED EAST 1849-1913
- 39 **The Dignity of Autumn, 1907**
Signed and dated
Oil on canvas · 50 × 42in / 127 × 106.7cm
L.31.98
- RICHARD EURICH 1903-1992
- 40 **The Long Barrow, c.1965**
Oil on canvas · 20 × 24in / 50.8 × 61cm
L.53.98 ILLUSTRATED P.38
- DAVID EVANS 1929-1988
- 41 **Cafeteria, 1975**
Signed
Watercolour · 25½ × 38in / 64.8 × 96.5cm
L.62.98 ILLUSTRATED P.39
- 42 **The Ventriloquist Performs, 1975**
Watercolour on paper · 25½ × 38¼in / 64.8 × 98.5cm
L.37.98 ILLUSTRATED P.39
- ERIC FRASER 1902-1983
- 43 **A collection of 28 designs, 1920-50**
Gouache on paper
L.19 (I-XXVIII) 98 ill. pp.1, 40-41
- GERALD GARDINER 1902-1959
- 44 **St Aldhelm's Head, c.1940**
Oil on canvas · 16 × 30in / 40.6 × 76.2cm
L.57.98 ILLUSTRATED P.42
- CHARLES MARCH GERE 1869-1957
- 45 **The Italian Entrance to the Simplon Pass, 1937**
Signed and dated, inscribed with title on label to reverse
Tempera on canvasboard · 11 × 14in / 28 × 35.5cm
Exhibited: Leeds City Art Gallery, 1937(?); Royal Academy (no.582?)
L.5.98 ILLUSTRATED P.42
- FRIEDRICH GOLL, LATE 19TH CENTURY
- 46 **Still life with a Retort and other objects associated with chemistry**
Signed
Oil on panel · 13 × 9½in / 33 × 24cm
L.87.99
- BARBARA GREG 1900-1983
- 47 **Blending Cotton, c.1940**
Woodcut · 5 × 6in / 12.7 × 15.2cm
L.76.98
- ROBIN GUTHRIE 1902-1971
- 48 **Hunter, 1920s**
Oil on canvas board · 22 × 18in / 56 × 45.7cm
L.2.98
- GERTRUDE HARVEY 1886-1966
- 49 **Kitchen Still Life, c.1920s**
Oil on canvas · 16 × 12¼in / 40.7 × 32.4cm
L.65.98 ILLUSTRATED P.43
- HAROLD HARVEY 1874-1941
- 50 **Village Gossip, 1923**
Signed and dated
Oil on canvas · 18 × 24in / 46 × 61cm
L.24.98
- JOHN HASSALL 1868-1948
- 51 **Morning, Noon and Night, c.1900**
Chromolithographic Prints
Published by Lawrence & Jellicoe
25¼ × 8½in / 64.2 × 21.6cm
L.80.99

- TRISTRAM HILLIER 1905–1983
- 52 **Mud on the Road, 1980**
Signed and dated
Oil on canvas · 24 × 32in / 61 × 81.3cm
L.32.98 ILLUSTRATED P.44
- HAROLD HITCHCOCK B.1914
- 53 **Woodland Fantasy, 1963**
Signed with monogram and dated
Watercolour
L.3.98
- PAUL HOGARTH B.1917
- 54 **Drawings recording Laporte's industrial activities, c.1960**
Signed with initials
Black chalk · 21 × 15in / 53.4 × 38.2cm (m.o.)
H.3 (I–VI)
- FRÉDÉRIC-ANATOLE HOUBRON 1851–1908
- 55 **View of Waterloo Bridge with St. Paul's and the City Beyond, 1904**
Signed and dated
Oil on panel · 14 × 28in / 35.5 × 71.2cm
L.30.98
- JOHN FRANCIS KAVANAGH 1903–1985
- 56 **Workers lifting a steel construction, c.1937–40**
Bronze · 23½ × 33½in / 59.5 × 85cm
Provenance: The British School at Rome
L.16.98
- FELIX KELLY 1916–1994
- 57 **Gothic Lodge, Colliery Engine, c.1950s**
Oil on canvas · 17 × 22in / 43.2 × 55.9cm
L.58.98 ILLUSTRATED P.45
- 58 **Castle Terminus, c.1950s**
Oil on board · 17 × 22in / 43.2 × 55.9cm
L.59.98
- SIR GERALD FESTUS KELLY, P.R.A. 1879–1972
- 59 **Study for the State Portrait of King George VI, c.1938–1944**
Inscribed on the reverse in gouache, *The King XVIII* and in pencil part B-
Oil on canvas · 31 × 20in / 79 × 51cm
L.6.98 ILLUSTRATED P.46
- DAME LAURA KNIGHT 1877–1970
- 60 **The Coronation Route, 1953**
Signed
Oil on canvas · 40 × 30in / 101.6 × 76.2cm
L.46.98 ILLUSTRATED P.47
- WINIFRED KNIGHTS 1899–1947
- 61 **Goose Girl, 1918**
Signed and dated
Watercolour and pen & ink · 11 × 7in / 28 × 17.8cm
Provenance: The Artist's Estate
Literature: Winifred Knights exhibition catalogue, The Fine Art Society, 1995.
L.44.98 ILLUSTRATED P.48
- 62 **Illustration for Grimms' Fairy Tales, circa 1918–19**
Watercolour, pencil and black ink · 10 × 7in / 25.5 × 17.8cm
Provenance: The Artist's Estate
L.75.98
- G.H. LAPORTE 1799–1873
- 63 **The Royal Buckhounds**
Oil on canvas · 20 × 26in / 50.8 × 66.1cm
H.7
- 64 **Equestrian Portrait**
Oil on canvas · 20 × 30in / 50.8 × 76.2cm
H.8
- 65 **The Kill**
Oil on panel · 12 × 16in / 30.5 × 40.7cm
H.9
- EMANUEL LEVY 1900–1986
- 66 **Wool production, c.1940**
Oil on canvas · 20 × 30in / 50.8 × 76.2cm
L.18.98
- SIR THOMAS MONNINGTON 1902–1976
- 67 **Design for the Conference Hall Ceiling, Council House, Bristol, c.1953**
Tempera over pencil on a gesso ground · 30 × 76in / 76.3 × 93.1cm
Provenance: The Artist's Estate
Exhibited: Royal Academy, 1956 (1174)
Literature: Thomas Monnington, *The Fine Art Society*, 1997, p. 21–2 and 53; repr. in colour p.32
L.9.98 ILLUSTRATED P.49
- C.R.W. NEVINSON 1889–1946
- 68 **Portrait of Hannen Swaffer, 1938**
Signed
Oil on canvas · 43¼ × 32in / 110 × 81.5cm
L.21.98 ILLUSTRATED P.50
- KEITH NEW B.1926
- 69 **Lake at the Edge of a Quarry – Clophill, Bedfordshire, 1998**
Pastel and acrylic · 40 × 61in / 101.6 × 154.9cm
L.79.98 ILLUSTRATED P.51
- SIR WILLIAM NICHOLSON 1872–1949
- 70 **An Alphabet, 1898**
Woodblock prints
each 9½ × 7½in / 24 × 19cm
L.25 (I–XXVI) 98 ILLUSTRATED P.53
- 71 **The Square Book of Animals, 1900**
Woodblock prints
each 5in sq / 12.7cm sq
L.26 (I–XII) 98
- FRANK OLDHAM Fl. 1940s
- 72 **Hydrogen peroxide production of the 1890s, using barium peroxide in a batch process, Ray's Yard, Luton**
Signed and dated
Oil on canvas · 28 × 36in / 71.2 × 91.5cm
H.1 ILLUSTRATED P.8
- 73 **Kingsway Works, Luton, 1947**
Signed and dated
Oil on canvas · 28 × 36in / 71.2 × 91.5cm
H.2 ILLUSTRATED P.8
- 74 **The 1930s Tunnel kiln, Kingsway works, Luton**
Signed and dated
Oil on canvas · 28 × 36in / 71.2 × 91.5cm
H.10 ILLUSTRATED P.8
- 75 **Distillation Units mid 1940s, Kingsway Works, Luton**
Signed and dated
Oil on canvas · 28 × 36in / 71.2 × 91.5cm
H.11 ILLUSTRATED P.8
- ENGLISH SCHOOL
- 76 **Park Street: An Architect's impression, c.1916**
Watercolour
15¼ × 18¼in / 40 × 47.5cm
H.5
- DAVID PARTRIDGE B.1919
- 77 **Tumulus, 1973**
Nails on board · 25 × 37in / 63.5 × 94cm
L.39.98 ILLUSTRATED P.54
- CHARLES PEARS 1873–1958
- 78 **Searchlight Practice, 1940**
Oil on panel · 20 × 14in / 50.8 × 35.6cm
L.28.98 ILLUSTRATED P.55
- PITOISET, FRENCH SCHOOL, c.1888
- 79 **Leçons des Choses · L'Eclairage (Lighting)**
Assemblage · 20 × 12in / 51 × 30cm
L.88 (I–111) 99
- 80 **Leçons des Choses · Teinture et impression des tissus (Dyeing and printing of fabrics)**
Assemblage · 20 × 12in / 51 × 30cm
L.89 (I–111) 99 ILLUSTRATED P.2
- 81 **Leçons des Choses · Le vin, le cidre et la bière (Wine, cider and beer)**
Assemblage · 20 × 12in / 51 × 30cm
L.90 (I–111) 99
- PATRICIA PREECE 1894–1966
- 82 **Still Life, 1925**
Oil on canvas · 18 × 14in / 45.8 × 35.6cm
L.64.98
- LEONARD RAVEN-HILL 1867–1942
- 83 **Café Scene, 1888**
Signed and dated
Oil on canvas · 13 × 17in / 33 × 43.2cm
L.66.98 ILLUSTRATED P.16
- MICHAEL J. SALAMAN 1911–1987
- 84 **Italian Washerwomen, 1928**
Oil on canvas · 48 × 36in / 122 × 91.5cm
L.8.98
- KIHEI SASAJIMA B.1901
- 85 **Landscape**
Woodblock print
H.6
- COLIN SEALY 1891–1964
- 86 **Carnival, 1940s**
Signed with initials
Watercolour and ink · 14¾ × 9¾in / 37.5 × 24.75cm
L.4.98
- CHARLES SIMS 1873–1928
- 87 **Arras, 1918**
Oil on panel · 15 × 17½in / 38.2 × 44.5cm
L.27.98 ILLUSTRATED P.57
- JULIA SORRELL B.1955
- 88 **Sunflowers, 1996**
Mixed media on paper · 40 × 25¼in / 101.6 × 64.2cm
L.38.98

- AUSTIN OSMAN SPARE 1888–1956
- 89 *Redundant Isle, 1947*
Signed, dated and inscribed with title
Oil on panel · 9 × 12in / 22.9 × 30.5cm
L.41.98 ILLUSTRATED P.58
- HUMPHREY SPENDER B.1910
- 90 *Traffic Landscape, c.1965*
Oil on board · 15½ × 22in / 39.5 × 56cm
L.50.98 ILLUSTRATED P.59
- CHARLOTTE SPIERS 1873–1914
- 91 *Two Heads in Profile, 1881*
Two plates
Signed and dated
Painted, glazed, ceramic · 15in (38cm) diameter
L.35 (1–11) 98
- JAMES TARR 1905–1996
- 92 *Painting Tents, 1952*
Signed and dated
Gouache on paper · 12 × 10in / 30 × 25.5cm
L.20.98 ILLUSTRATED P.60
- WALTER TAYLOR 1860–1943
- 93 *Mornington Crescent, 1911*
Watercolour · 12 × 15in / 30 × 38.2cm
L.29.98
- JOSEPH ALFRED TERRY 1872–1961
- 94 *Les Connoisseurs, c.1895*
Signed and inscribed on reverse
Oil on board · 20 × 17in / 50.8 × 43.2cm
Provenance: The Artist's Studio Sale, Christie's
South Kensington, 3 July 1986 (lot 335)
L.47.98
- DAVID TINDLE B.1932
- 95 *Thames View, 1957*
Signed and dated
Oil on canvas · 30 × 40in / 76.2 × 101.6cm
L.48.98
- 96 *Still Life with Fish, 1957*
Signed and dated
Oil on canvas · 40 × 30in / 101.6 × 76.2cm
L.49.98 ILLUSTRATED P.61
- JOHN TUNNARD 1900–1971
- 97 *In Many Moons, 1966*
Signed and dated
Oil on board · 60 × 48in / 152.4 × 122cm
L.33.98 ILLUSTRATED P.63
- FRED UHLMAN 1901–1985
- 98 *Manhattan at Night, 1962*
Signed
Oil on canvas board · 16 × 20in / 40.6 × 50.8cm
L.42.98 ILLUSTRATED P.62

99 *Red Sky over Cottages, c.1970*
Signed
Oil on canvas · 23½ × 35½in / 59.8 × 90.2cm
L.43.98

100 *Cottages and Red Sky, c.1970*
Signed
Oil on board · 23½ × 35½in / 59.8 × 90.2cm
L.56.98

J. COBURN WITHEROP 1906–1984

101 *Moon over Mullion, 1953*
Signed, dated and inscribed with title
Tempera on board · 27 × 33in / 68.5 × 84cm
Exhibited: Liverpool Academy of Arts, 1954
L.7.98 ILLUSTRATED P.64

FRANK WOOD 1862–1953

102 *Anemones, 1936*
Tempera on panel · 10 × 10in / 25.5 × 25.5cm
Exhibited: Royal Academy 1936 (907)
L.1.97

Members of the Laporte Art Committee

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES



DONALD ANDREWS, who commenced his career in agricultural land management, joined the Property Department of Laporte in 1986. He is currently responsible for all the Group's real estate and over the years has acquired or divested all the buildings which were the subject of the Arturo di Stefano commission. Having had the responsibility in 1997 for selling the Lowry, he was pleased to be invited to act as Secretary to the Art Committee. Donald describes himself as an unsophisticated appreciator, with a particular liking for 1920s paintings and three-dimensional pieces.



GILLIAN CHAPPLE joined Laporte in January 1988 and is Group Pensions Manager. She is a qualified member of both the Pensions Management Institute and the Institute of British Payroll & Pension Managers. Gillian has always worked in the pension arena, including 10 years with a firm of consulting actuaries and 4 years with a nationalised industry. Prior to joining the Art Committee Gillian had no formal art appreciation training – being of the 'I know what I like' school and an impulse buyer at art auctions. As well as numerous watercolours, she has a growing collection of miniatures.



J. W. LENG joined Laporte as Chief Executive on 1 October 1995. Prior to joining Laporte, he was Chief Executive of Low & Bonar plc, an international packaging and specialist materials group based in Scotland. He joined Low & Bonar in 1984 as Managing Director of one of their principal UK subsidiaries, he joined the main Board in 1989 and became Chief Executive in 1992. His previous career was with John Waddington plc where he held a number of senior management positions.



PAUL LISS studied History of Art at Manchester University, after which he completed a bursary with the Auctioneers, Sothebys. He then worked with the Old Master picture dealers, Hazlitt Gooden Fox, for four years, and has been working independently for the past ten years advising museums, institutions and private collectors. He is especially interested in the work of Rome Scholars, Sir Frank Brangwyn, Women artists and painters in Tempera. He has organised a number of exhibitions which have sought to reaccess the work of artists whose reputations have suffered neglect, including, Winifred Knights, Sir Thomas Monnington and Charles Mahoney.



ROY PARROTT, who retired as a Director of the company and Divisional Chairman of the Electronic Materials Division in December 1998, joined Laporte as an apprentice in 1955. Appointed a member of the Executive Committee in 1983, he was invited onto the Board in 1996. With early career appointments to the company's northern plants he identified strongly with the bold industrial and moorland landscapes of the region. This stimulated his interest in 20th century art and he was a regular visitor to London's art galleries. Sadly Roy passed away in January 2000 at the age of 59.



RAY WARD joined Laporte as Group Public Relations Manager in 1985, having been the account director at the company's PR consultants for the previous seven years. To mark the company's centenary in 1988 he oversaw the commission of the Laporte Rose Window in St Alban's Cathedral. Now semi-retired, his broad knowledge of the company and its products keeps him in demand as a company adviser and archivist.

Appendix · Company Chronology

COMPILED BY RAY WARD

LAPORTE AND ITS 1880S ORIGINS

Bernard Frederick Laporte was born in Hanover on 31st October 1862, one of four children of Jean and Louise Laporte of Dusseldorf. Brought up with an interest in practical science and a cosmopolitan outlook, in his teens he settled in Belgium working as a representative of a German chemicals company. Having travelled across Europe he settled in England in 1882. Here, at the age of 20 he established his own business in Yorkshire importing chemicals from mainland Europe. In 1888 he started a manufacturing business in Bradford making hydrogen peroxide.

Yorkshire, in those days, was the centre of the world's wool trade. His decision to manufacture hydrogen peroxide, a bleach, was an important part of his original idea of bleaching wool before it was spun and woven into fabrics, rather than at the finishing stage.

Single minded in his determination to make a success of his new business, Bernard began exploring southwards by pony and trap, searching for markets that would help it flourish.

In time he came to Luton, then the centre of the millinery industry with more than 25,000 employed making hats. Straw hats were the height of fashion with lighter shades fetching the highest prices. Hydrogen peroxide was quickly seen as an ideal bleach to whiten the straw and faced with a large and secure new market, Bernard moved his plant south to establish production in Ray's Yard, Luton in 1898.

THE 1900S

Keen to expand he developed new operations in bleaching and cleaning chemicals. Some years later he moved into minerals extraction to secure his raw materials, particularly barytes – a major source of barium peroxide, from which hydrogen peroxide is made.

In October 1905, at the age of 43 Bernard Laporte moved his home to 45 Park Street, Luton. Part of the house was maintained as a general office. He enlarged the site to about half an acre by buying adjoining properties and then moved the plant there from Ray's Yard. Known as the Park Street premises this was the company's base for a decade until in 1916, when a larger site at Kingsway was purchased.

The business became a limited company in 1908.

By 1910 the company was fully established as a supplier of bleaching and cleaning chemicals for woven and dyed fabrics and textiles. With a secure home market international trade was increasing and the company was gaining in stature and reputation.

THE 1910S

By 1911 the variety and number of bleaching and cleaning products was growing steadily. The first samples of sodium perborate were developed, laying the foundations for a major business that was to sustain Laporte for the next 80 years, and more advanced concepts, including sulphur dioxide bleaching were being tried out.

The Great War also brought major changes in manufactur-

ing as traditional sources of essential raw materials were cut off by the military conflict. New processes had to be developed quickly, utilising indigenous reserves, so that production could be maintained. In addition, because so many men were needed for the Allied Armies, women workers were taken on for the first time to replace them.

Many company employees served in France. One, Bill Piggott returned after the war to become Company Secretary in 1922 and held this office until 1949, being appointed a director in 1944. His total service with the company was a record 52 years.

By the end of the Great War Laporte was in a strong financial position. Capital, Preference, Ordinary and Deferred Shares were fully covered by the company's liquid assets and dividends amounting to 32.5% on capital were being paid, though subject to a tax of 6 shillings in the pound on ready cash.

THE 1920S

In the period immediately following the First World War, Laporte, in spite of the economic uncertainties of mass unemployment and associated political tensions, continued to expand its core activities.

As the business expanded the company moved to increase its financial foundation. The original prospectus had provided for a capital of £25,000 – six thousand £1 Preference Shares, four thousand £1 Deferred Shares and 15,000 Ordinary Shares of £1, all with equal voting rights. Under the new arrangement an additional 147,000 Ordinary £1 Shares were created. At the same time the remuneration of the Chairman was fixed at £300 per annum and the other directors, excluding the Managing Director, at £200 per annum. A modest sharing of a part of the profits was also approved.

The 1920s were significant for Laporte in so far as the company's growth through acquisition dates from this period. Wm Burton & Sons Ltd of Bethnal Green, London, the first company to be acquired, manufactured cleansing products for textiles including specialist cleaners for cony, fox and the more exotic furs. Another Burton product was the dye used for the ubiquitous "red tape".

As the company grew it became increasingly prolific in the development of innovative products, expanding from its original operations in textiles bleaching and laundering into numerous other areas.

Sadly the 1920s marked the death of the company's founder, at the age of 61 on 19th May 1924. Engaged in the day to day conduct of the business to within a few days of his death, his loss was deeply felt by the company and beyond. Bernard Laporte was the classic entrepreneur. By the time of his death the company was an established world producer of peroxide products and had become the sole UK manufacture of a wide range of barium chemicals.

By 1925 quality standards were becoming an issue in the company. Deficiencies had been noted in the production of hydrogen peroxide for some time while black specks of carbon, dragged down in the barium sulphate precipitated during the sulphuric acid process, would contaminate the white by-product, used as a paint pigment (known as blanc fixe) making it unsuitable for many applications. New processes became essential when competitors started to exploit these weaknesses. Treatment with phosphoric acid finally overcame the problem, contaminants being removed as a sludge, and a new range of "SPEKEFRE" blanc fixe was successfully launched.

By 1928 with demand for hydrogen peroxide greatly

exceeding its chemical production capacity, Laporte laid down its plans for the development of an electrolytic process, based on a German method developed in Munich. This was to become the leading world technology for the next twenty years.

THE 1930S

Early in the 1930s Laporte made its first assertive moves to expand beyond the boundaries of bleaches and laundry products. The arrival in test amounts of a new compound, titanium dioxide, signalled a threat to the company's large market for barium sulphate. A by-product from hydrogen peroxide manufacture, barium sulphate was used extensively as a filler in paint. Titanium dioxide proved better in every respect, much whiter and brighter and once available commercially would command a premium price. Much of the 1930s was occupied in the development, manufacture and subsequent marketing of titanium dioxide and by the end of the decade, Laporte had become one of the world's leading manufacturers of this innovative pigment.

In 1931, however, against a backdrop of growing political, social and financial upheaval, Laporte was forced to tackle some major business problems. Better and more economical processes required fewer operators and with sales under pressure employment levels had to be reduced.

Despite the global recession, Laporte continued its pioneering development of titanium dioxide and in 1932, constructed the first commercial plant for its manufacture in the UK.

From 1933 onwards world economics improved and in 1936 the company established its first overseas subsidiary, Crystal Laporte Pty, with a plant in Sydney,

Australia. The company's profit that year approached £100,000.

By 1937 Laporte was licensing its new process for the production of hydrogen peroxide across Europe and beyond. Improvements in road and rail transport, supported with major engineering works such as the newly opened Simplon Pass, greatly eased the movement across the continent, making possible commercial access to previously remote areas.

Such was the international enthusiasm for the new process, that in 1938, following the move into Australia two years earlier, a plant for the electrolytic production of hydrogen peroxide was established in Sydney. A purpose-designed facility for the production of a range of pharmaceutical products was also constructed there. Investment in the company's more traditional products was also bringing success to the point that they contributed more than 60% of total sales. By 1938 Laporte had become the country's leading supplier of laundry products, used both domestically and commercially for bleaching and stain removing – these products had the benefit of preserving colours without damaging fibres – but pigments were also emerging as a new and important product line.

THE 1940S

The year that started as the "Phoney" war ended with the "Battle of Britain". The War led to steep increases in taxation from 5s 6d in the £ in 1939 to 7s 0d by late 1939 and 7s 6d from April 1940. Cost of living payments increased and, as a patriotic duty, the company, along with many other firms, made up the wages of employees serving with HM Forces.

By the end of 1940 much of British industry was geared to the production of war materials. Laporte's major

contribution was in the field of munitions with barium and strontium peroxide used in explosive, incendiary and pyrotechnic compositions, and ammonium and potassium perchlorates used for tracer ammunition and flares.

At the Government's request, Laporte began to manufacture ammonium and potassium perchlorates for urgent use in tracer ammunition and flares. Prior to its fall, France had been the sole source of these highly effective incendiary chemicals.

At the end of the Second World War the Government turned to Laporte to inspect the German V1 and V2 production plants as these weapons incorporated high test peroxide in their launch and propulsion systems. Subsequently Laporte advised on the disposal and relocation to the UK of the manufacturing operation.

In the aftermath of World War II, with the Government's determination to improve working conditions across the country, the standard working week was reduced from 47 to 44 hours and average weekly wages raised to twice the pre-war level. Similar gestures were made by Laporte to its stockholders who received a total dividend of 17.5% for the year. Pensions for ex-employees were formally introduced and, for the first time, consolidated accounts were published.

The winter of 1947 was the worst recorded for a century with severe disruption of road and rail transport, leading to shortages of raw materials and equipment, reduced fuel supplies and major cuts in electricity output. Laporte, like other industries recovering from the aftermath of World War II, was severely affected and the loss of sales resulted in a 23% fall in profits. Nevertheless, with an eye to the future, major capital was committed to the development of a new site at

Warrington for the manufacture of hydrogen peroxide by advanced methods.

The group's foreign-based business suffered during the Second World War because of communications and transport difficulties. Crystal-Laporte, the Australian manufacturing company, soldiered on although specialist spares, such as platinum anodes and ceramic diaphragms, were almost unobtainable. After the War, mainstream production was re-established and this, coupled with new investment and fresh management, enabled the sales network to be rebuilt and markets recovered.

THE 1950S

The long-awaited opening of the Warrington site – Baronet Works – took place on 29th March 1950. The most advanced in the world for its technical design and configuration, the plant produced Hydrogen Peroxide by the Electrolyte process and was notable for its silence and almost antiseptic cleanliness.

It was usual for large companies to have their own sidings, shunting engines and wagons to move goods into and out of their plants. Trains of wagons would be brought to a nearby marshalling yard where the companies' own engines would take over. Laporte was no exception and there were major rail facilities at Kingsway to handle the large amount of ore from its mine-workings in the Pennines, Derbyshire and Devon. Finished products were also despatched by rail.

Due to the explosive nature of hydrogen peroxide safety precautions dictated that there should be no risk of sparks from the shunting engine. A unique solution to the problem was to use a fireless steam engine. With no open furnace, the engine's boiler was charged with pressurised steam from the company's boilers. This

allowed it to operate for an hour or so before returning for re-charging.

By now demand for Laporte's titanium dioxide, the principal filler in modern paint, was so great that plans were made for production to be transferred from Kingsway, Luton to Stallingborough on the Humber Estuary. Here on 19 July 1951 Battery Works was born. In February 1953 a North Sea tidal rise of 32ft coupled with strong onshore winds overwhelmed the sea defences of much of the East Coast resulting in thousands of acres being flooded. Vital construction of the new £2.5m titanium dioxide plant at Stallingborough was halted as seawater swept into the boiler house and sub-station. Despite the set back, the first commercial consignment of titanium dioxide was shipped to the Empire Paper Mills, Dartford, Kent in July of that year.

Laporte's move to Grimsby formed an association with the town and its inhabitants that was to last for 31 years. By 1952 the workforce numbered 250, almost all drawn from the town and the surrounding villages. Advertisements for workers at £12 a week prompted a flood of applicants as ex-fisherman, ex-dairymen, farm labourers, builders, mechanics and bakers came to work for the company. At its height the plant was producing four per cent of the world's output of titanium dioxide and employed more than 1,200 people. In September 1984 the entire plant was sold as a going concern to SCM Chemicals (now Millennium Chemicals) for £81m, marking the start of the company's withdrawal from commodity manufacture.

By 1951 Laporte had become too big to be based "out of town" and, for executives to gather from many parts of the world in one place, a London location was essential. So, on 1st July, the Registered Office moved to Hanover House, 14 Hanover Square, London W1.

The mid-1950s marked a peak in scientific research at Laporte with major R&D investment at Luton in the autoxidation process, the revolutionary new way for manufacturing hydrogen peroxide using an organic route. Today this is the process by which almost all hydrogen peroxide is manufactured world-wide.

Laporte had by now become a widely diversified business with trading risks spread across a wide cross section of industries. Sales in the 1957 financial year increased by 14% and total capital employed reached £13m – about £3,600 per employee (£150,000 per employee in 1999). In the twelve years following the ending of World War II profit had increased almost nine times to £21.8m and the issued capital more than seven times to £3.6m.

In 1958 a new logo was introduced based on three interlocking diamonds, representing the chemical structure of hydroquinone, the key compound in the manufacture of hydrogen peroxide by the revolutionary autoxidation process. It also delineated the three divisions that then existed. The original was overprinted with the letters L.I.L. to reflect the name of the company. The logo in a revised and up dated form remains in use today both as a marketing symbol and international trade-mark.

THE 1960S

The 1960s marked a major expansion of UK operations at Laporte with acquisitions that included Glebe Mines, Derbyshire; Peter Spence, Widnes; Howards of Ilford, Essex and a joint venture with Imperial Smelting in Boron Chemicals. Divisional trading was introduced with two divisions, General Chemicals and Organics and Pigments based in the UK, and a third Overseas, sweeping together operations in Australia, Germany, Spain and India.

Laporte's links with northern industrial towns span the 20th century. Manufacturing expanded steadily from the late 1940s to the end of the 1960s, adding to the Group companies from the industrial heartland of the North, including Castleford, Warrington, Widnes and Rotherham.

In 1960 Paul Hogarth was commissioned by Laporte to visit company sites and capture the essential components of their operations in a series of pen and ink drawings. The immediate success of his work stimulated requests for additional drawings but being unable to meet the tight timetable required, John Barton was given the work. A selection of illustrations by both artists was used in the 1960 annual report and in other corporate literature of the period.

Growth by acquisition continued and in 1961 Laporte acquired Howards and Sons Ltd a long established family run business. Founded in 1797 at the very commencement of the modern chemical industry, Howards spanned the transformation of chemicals production from a cottage industry based on the alchemy of alums, dyes, perfumes and herbal medicines, to the industrial scale operations that underlie modern chemical manufacture. Initially a producer of drugs and chemicals for sale in chemist shops, the company originally ran a pharmacy at Plough Court in the City of London. By 1823 it had become a renowned manufacturer of fine chemicals and the first UK producer of quinine. Subsequently, Howards developed into a leading supplier of cocaine, citric, tartaric and benzoic acids, iodides and bromides, menthol, thymol, lactates and bicarbonate of soda. Camphor was introduced in 1906, thorium in 1914 and, from 1916, the company was recognised as a successful manufacturer of aspirin.

Financially, 1962 was disappointing with a 22% decline in profits due to difficult trading, excess industry capacity and intense competition from Europe. Despite this, long-term prospects were encouraging, particularly in the development of activated earths. One of the most versatile products of this research, a synthetic hectorite with exceptional thixotropic properties was patented. Given the trade name Laponite, it is today widely used in paint, cosmetics and household products.

In 1963 the company established its first overseas plant for the manufacture of titanium dioxide in Bunbury, Western Australia. During this year it also sold its Canadian operation, Howards, an offshoot of Howards of Ilford.

For much of the company's history Laporte has extracted the minerals needed for production from quarries in rural parts of Britain. From the earliest days the company has been fully committed to the restoration of exhausted workings, returning the terrain to its original contours and to sympathetic replanting of the landscape with indigenous species of trees and other plants.

The Group's international investment in the manufacture of hydrogen peroxide using its revolutionary autoxidation process continued at a high level. Plants were opened in Brazil and Munich and an agreement signed to build a plant in South Africa. In Japan there were celebrations to mark the tenth anniversary of the construction of the plant there.

With business expanding rapidly both sales and profit were at record levels. Widnes was one site to benefit from the strong flow of capital investment with the introduction of molecular sieves. Performing a vital role in the refining of petrol to achieve higher octane ratings, they contributed to the improvements in

restoration and the 64 openings filled with clear glass. Using medieval staining and colouring techniques, Alan Younger, the designer created a window containing 8,000 pieces of individually coloured and fired glass, which discretely incorporates the company's logo. The window cost £70,000 and was dedicated by Diana, Princess of Wales on 26th September 1989.

The 1980s were a remarkable period for Laporte. At the start of the decade the company had been heavily dependent upon a limited range of industrial and commodity chemicals, almost entirely manufactured in the UK and Australia. The changes brought about through the enlargement and expansion of the Group, triggered by the 1984 sale of the titanium dioxide business, provided the spur for a transformation in the scale and breadth of the company's operations without precedent in history.

The defining features of this success were its rapid expansion by acquisition into new areas of operation and, as confidence grew, the pursuit of new opportunities for expansion and profitable growth in markets and regions where Laporte had no previous experience.

As a result, by the end of the 1980s Laporte had become the UK's second largest independent chemicals company (only ICI was bigger) – a leading international speciality chemicals business, with five autonomous divisions and the Interox joint venture in peroxygens with Solvay et Cie of Belgium. Three core divisions, Speciality Organics, Timber Treatment and Building Products had been created entirely by acquisition, and manufacturing operations had been extended to 27 countries. Best of all, with 65% of sales generated outside the UK, there was a cash surplus.

However, the diversity of activities which had proved so

successful in the 1980s was to prove an unstable formula in the harsh economic climate of the highly competitive and global marketplace that was to emerge in the 1990s.

THE 1990S

A decade of unprecedented growth was brought to an end by the relatively sudden and exceptionally deep world recession of the early 1990s. It emerged as a small economic cloud in the UK in the second half of 1990, to grow rapidly and deeply throughout 1991, rolling like a ferocious thunderstorm across the world's industrialised countries in 1992 and 1993, easing as a force in 1994 but not finally fading away until 1995/96. In the process, it caused immense damage to business, massive global unemployment and considerable political turmoil.

The more sober trading environment facing Laporte in the early 1990s contrasted with the heady years of the previous decade and exposed serious weaknesses in the company's operational structure. There were too many small cash hungry businesses, strung like a necklace across all five continents, and it was inevitable that change had to come.

The ideal of small 'acorn' businesses growing to become large oak trees had been dashed by the recession. Initiatives to eliminate product duplication, streamline administration, reduce costs and shorten lines of communication were introduced. Despite these and other rationalisations, the company's balance sheet was sufficiently strong for the board to decide that it could still continue its long-term growth plans based on diversity within specialities.

In a final move away from commodities, the company announced its intention to pull out of hydrogen

peroxide, the product that for 102 years had been synonymous with Laporte.

With strong competition from new players in its traditional market Interox, the world's largest producer of hydrogen peroxide, had been experiencing falling sales, rising costs and declining profits for some years. In addition, ecological and technological advances were forcing formulation changes on the huge international detergents market, significantly reducing demand for persalts, Interox's second biggest product line.

The agreement reached at the end of 1991 between Laporte and Solvay, the two partners, was to transfer the two commodity peroxygen businesses to Solvay and the third business - Organics Peroxides - to Laporte. Concurrently, Solvay's 25% stake in Laporte would be cancelled. Thus it was with a spirit of friendship that in May 1992 this long-standing joint venture was brought to a harmonious end.

Freed from the last of its major commodity businesses, Laporte could now complete its transformation into a speciality chemicals company. The 1992 acquisition of Rockwood in the USA re-established the company as a supplier of inorganic pigments, this time in compounds based on iron oxide. More acquisitions over the next three years followed, creating yet a further new business which, solely by acquisition, has since become a major global supplier of iron oxide pigments.

A move was also made into adhesives in 1993 with the acquisition of Evode plc of Stafford, the first publicly quoted company to be bought by Laporte. By moving it into the company's Building Products Division Evode, the dominant UK producer of building adhesives, was envisaged as providing the base on

which to build a major European-wide operation in building chemicals, capable of taking on all-comers in the mushrooming European construction market.

By 1994 the economic climate had recovered sufficiently for sales and profits to again advance and, with the Evode acquisition by 1996 Group sales had risen to over £1bn. Between 1985 and 1995 more than 110 businesses had been acquired. The architect of this transformation from commodity to speciality chemicals was Ken Minton, who was Chief Executive from 1986 until his retirement in 1995, shortly after becoming Chairman.

However, progress to integrate and rationalise the wide web of activities was slow and the cash needed to develop them was beginning to impose an intolerable financial strain. In addition, systems of management and control were in danger of breaking down. Jim Leng, the new Chief Executive, joined in October 1995 and almost immediately instituted a major strategic review.

This resulted in a programme of radical change that was to last for close on three years. By the end the Group had narrowed its focus onto a limited number of truly global growth businesses, all of which had strong market positions combined with the technologies and products to provide potential competitors with high barriers of entry.

As the programme of rationalisation ran its course, the number of operating sites fell until almost half had been divested, merged or closed. Significant reductions in costs were also achieved, ensuring that within the global marketplace all of Laporte's major businesses were internationally competitive.

The final page of this fundamental review was to re-engineer the corporate centre and to close and lease out the Luton headquarters (leaving Luton town after almost 100 years), and to sell the registered office in

reliability and efficiency of car engines. Molecular sieves were to become a mainstay product of the company for the next 25 years.

1965 was the year of the first major reorganisation of the Group's operations with the idea of making the marketing of Laporte products more efficient. Group trade was completely analysed and classified into market sectors and products arranged into three "Selling" divisions. Two, General Chemicals and Organics & Pigments, were UK-based and the third brought together the overseas business into one Overseas division. A growing market in bleaching earths, used to purify vegetable and mineral oils, led to an upsurge in demand for Fuller's Earth. The company operated quarries across southern England with major activities at Redhill, Surrey.

Deep layers of red sand which overlay the thinner deposits of Fuller's Earth had to be stripped away before clay could be worked. Sand from each day's operations was stacked and sold to the construction industry. Exhausted quarries were filled in and sympathetically restored to blend with adjoining topographical features.

Advances in technology were having a major impact on the development of new products and processes at Laporte. No less than 20% of Group turnover was to the paint industry as a result of its success in titanium dioxide and phthalic anhydride manufacture. Chemicals were being developed for the emerging printed circuit board and synthetic fibre industries and, with world production of plastics doubling every five years, major investment was being directed towards the production of resins and plasticisers.

Phthalic anhydride, a synthetic organic chemical, was widely used in plastics manufacture in the 1960s. By

1968, the business, with the purchase of Howards of Ilford in 1961, was at full capacity. By the end of the year new plant had been commissioned at Stallingborough, increasing total production by 12,000 tpa and plans for a further expansion of 30,000 tpa had been announced.

THE 1970S

Investment in the development of a new chloride process for the manufacture of Titanium Dioxide was draining Laporte's cash reserves leaving it vulnerable to predators, and at the very start of the decade Burmah Oil launched an unwelcome take-over bid. Although the Board strongly resisted their approach it soon became apparent that unless new cash resources could be found quickly the bid would succeed.

Help came in the form of a convertible loan from Solvay et Cie of Belgium, a leading European manufacturer of Hydrogen Peroxide, who proposed the establishment of a joint venture that would combine both company's interests in the international manufacture and marketing of their "active oxygen" products. Thus in 1971 the Interox Group was formed, the start of an association between the two companies that was to last for 21 years.

With its new and secure base Laporte could again concentrate on developing its pigments technology. In 1971 a capacity expansion to 60,000 tpa made it the largest UK producer of phthalic anhydride. By 1973 profitability had been achieved on the titanium dioxide chloride plant and the benefits of a superior quality product were beginning to be enjoyed. In other areas too, radical expansion was underway.

The company's already considerable stake in effluent and water treatment chemicals was enlarged with the introduction of new products at the Peter Spence works in Widnes, while in Scotland the acid and aluminium

sulphate manufacturer, R & J Garroway Ltd was acquired.

The company's commitment to clay minerals was reinforced by the purchase, in 1973 of 40% of the Spanish producer, Minas de Gador SA and, in 1976 by the purchase of a 40% interest in the Brazilian company, Bentonit Uniao Ltda.

Elsewhere investment at Rotherham, the site acquired through the purchase of James Wilkinson & Son Ltd, paved the way for a larger and more extensive range of fluorine chemicals, and a small tableting plant was acquired to compound and tablet analgesic and other pharmaceutical preparations.

The formation of Interlox provided a great spur to the development of a global operation in peroxygen products. The combined technical and commercial strengths of the two partners quickly brought expansion in Spain, France, Germany, Australia, Finland, Portugal, India and Yugoslavia. Related products such as Caprolactone were introduced at Warrington and in 1978, with the formation of Interlox America, construction of a large new hydrogen peroxide plant at Houston, Texas commenced.

But the impact of the 1973 energy crisis had not been lost on the Laporte Board and the company's dependence on high volume, capital-intensive businesses was being questioned. With the appointment of a new chief executive in 1980 radical structural changes were to be made.

THE 1980s

The company's international operations had been expanding rapidly with the growth of the world economy throughout the 1980s. The large variety of companies joining the Group as a result of its ambi-

tious acquisition programme had precipitated a series of management reorganisations.

The first, in 1985, was the formation of a series of Strategic Business Areas each managed by a divisional product director. In 1986 this was refined with a core business structure which was strengthened further in 1987 by the appointment of core business managing directors. Finally, in 1988, fully-fledged divisional boards were created led by divisional chairmen each of whom was a member of the Laporte Board.

Within the new Group many of the acquired companies were developing vigorously and becoming hungry for capital to fund ambitious expansion plans. Smaller companies, possibly more profitable than their larger brothers but less able to justify major investment, had a hard task. As a result the Board had a juggling act to perform to meet the aspirations of its many new entrepreneurial managers.

Despite such strains, there was a common determination throughout its businesses to build Laporte into a strong and successful international speciality chemicals company. This success was reflected in a succession of financial results that from the mid to late 1980s were outstanding by any standard.

In the four years to 1986 pre-tax profits trebled and sales passed £500m. By 1990, with profits at £100m, the stock market capitalisation of the company had increased to the point that it was on the verge of joining the elite top 100 UK quoted companies.

In 1988 to mark the company's centenary, a major work of stained glass was commissioned to fill the rose window in the North Transept of St Albans Cathedral, whose diocese embraces Luton. Coincidentally, the circular stone window, more than 30ft in diameter, had been installed by Lord Grimthorpe in 1888 as part of a major

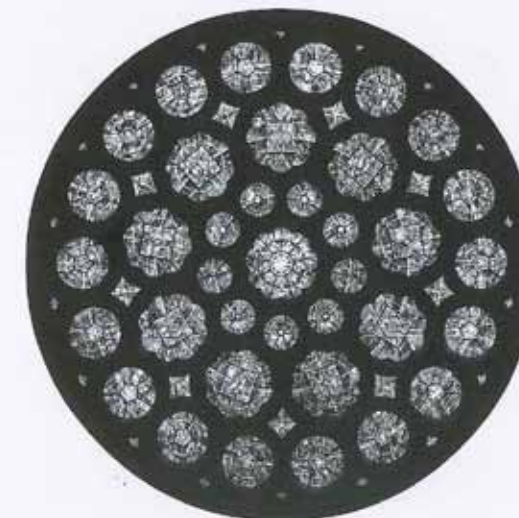
Bedford Square, London WC1. This allowed the corporate staff to be consolidated for the first time in decades in one office in Wigmore Street, London W1. Ironically, the new corporate office was just half a mile from Hanover House, which the company had first occupied nearly fifty years previously.

Inevitably the rationalisation and divestment programme had an impact on sales, with a reduction of almost one-third from the 1996 level. But with higher growth from businesses with a more competitive cost-base the company nevertheless achieved record profits and earnings per share in each of a succession of years. In addition, more than £300 million in cash was generated to put Laporte in a position, once again, to move ahead in expanding its global businesses.

During this period the effect of the improving UK economy, coupled with the country's expulsion from the European Monetary System, led to sterling appreci-

ating very strongly, particularly against the American and German currencies. The need for adding value to its operations by fully utilising the intellectual capacity of its workforce and exploiting its technology base, was now even more important. The company's strategy of focusing on leadership positions in its growth speciality sectors, was therefore reinforced with the £600 million acquisition of Inspec, a major business in Speciality Organics, completed in late 1997.

Thus by the end of the second millennium, Laporte had succeeded in remaining one of the most successful and profitable independent chemical companies in the world. Change has been a constant theme throughout its history and undoubtedly the company will continue to embrace future change as an opportunity in its business world as it looks forward to the future with confidence.



The Laporte Rose Window, St Albans Cathedral · Designed by Alan Younger, 1988

