

# FRYER *Folios*



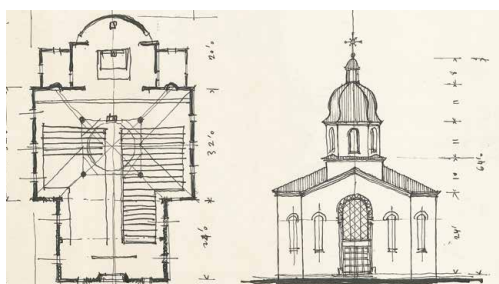
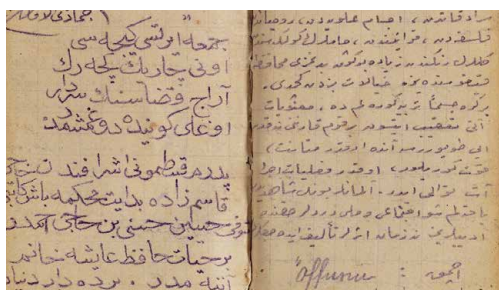
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Front cover: Map of a railway line from Berlin to Adrianópolis. In 'Diary of a Turkish Soldier who fought at Gallipoli', F592, Fryer Library, University of Queensland Library.

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# Peter and the Chinook

MARGOT HUTCHESON



Living in two leaky cabins on the edge of a rainforest without running water, electricity or any form of modern communications, without any modern conveniences at all, was in some ways a utopian dream. I lived in a valley in South-East Queensland on three blocks of land, which added up to about three hundred acres. In this community there were twelve to fifteen other households, people living in buildings of similarly eccentric construction to mine, all reflecting their owners' little foibles. One house was built of stone, like a fortress, inaccessible by vehicle.

I wanted to live for a time outside of society, I had no real political philosophy, except a rejection of authority and an intent to do it differently. However amongst all of us in the valley there was certainly an environmental ideology and an overwhelming desire to live a good life. The community ban on tree felling has surely paid off. After forty years of bush regeneration the valley is alive, drumming out life, wherever you look trees grown huge and elegant. Even forty years ago it was insect noisy there but now it's like a huge bush symphony.

Of course there is always trouble in paradise and problems came in cars with policemen, and by helicopter

with the army. I never knew what they were doing flying over at tree-top level, like a lost scene from *Apocalypse Now*. We seemed such a harmless mob, but the Queensland of the 70s hated hippies and all non-conformists. When in 1979 I went to visit a friend in Nambour Hospital and a top cop pulled me into a room to show me a map and ask me where I lived, with all our houses marked accurately and some of our names, it became obvious that they'd been researching the valley for some time. This is what the Chinooks disturbing our peace meant, mapping the hippies, and I had thought I was invisible, living an anonymous hippy life in the Queensland bush. We must have been so obvious.

When I saw the photo of two rustic cabins and some fruit trees for sale in a Queensland rainforest, posted on a handmade ad in the Balmain health food store window in Sydney in 1976, I didn't know any of these things. I just knew I had to buy it, live there in that strangely welcoming, enticing, green and curious place. I was imagining an exotic paradise to leap into, to paint, pick fruit off the trees, be with other people who also wanted to live differently, the only thing to fear would be the serpents.

I must have been dreaming. Even then, in the time before instant communications, before Google, the Internet, mobiles, before everything terrestrial was known and documented; who was living and where they were living was known. It's just that I didn't know that it was all recorded. Paranoia sneaked in with me to this idyll.

So I painted Peter in his beautiful Hibiscus Hawaiian shirt standing in the vegetable garden, the cabbage white butterflies fluttering about in between eating the cabbages, the rainforest and a banana grove in the background, pawpaw trees along the fence line, a choko growing along the fence that kept the wallabies from eating everything. Then from the corner of the eye, the noisy insect war machine which can't be ignored, the maggot in the luscious fruit.

I painted the largest work I'd yet attempted in the bedroom hut, beside the bed. It must have been winter because in the photos I have a jumper on. It hung on the wall in the other hut until I left the valley and then in the kitchen in Louisa Rd for some years. I'm very happy that it has found a new and permanent home in the Fryer Library, some two hours drive from where it was painted.

MARGOT HUTCHESON is an English artist, based in Buckinghamshire, who has lived and worked for long periods in Australia and Spain. In 1974, she left Britain for Australia, where she lived with the writer Peter Carey in an alternative community in Yandina, Queensland before moving to Bellingen on the mid-North Coast of NSW.

In 2009, her painting *Wasn't the Fitzgerald Inquiry fun?* was part of an exhibition of The Fitzgerald Collection at Queensland College of Art College Gallery. Margot's work is held in the collections of the National Gallery of Victoria, the University of New South Wales, Artbank and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Brisbane.

The Margot Hutcheson Collection, acquired by the Fryer Library in 2015, includes correspondence, photographs and artworks.

Image: *Peter and the Chinook* (c. 1979), Oil on canvas, 130 x 160cm