Agriculture is a significant part of human civilization not only because a primary measure of its success is the provision of sufficient and safe food, but also because its use of land has created, both consciously and accidentally, the landscapes we know. Artists have described and commented on these created landscapes, and this book is illustrated with artworks that reveal the fascinating changes that have taken place on the historical journey to the present. As the paradigms of agricultural practice have shifted, so has the relationship between art and agriculture. The idyllic depiction of manorial landscapes in the eighteenth century have, in our own age, given way to artistic expressions of dislocation.

The issues facing agriculture today are complex. The authors’ objective is to bring these issues to the attention of the public and of academic communities and to encourage discussion of possibilities for the future. The book examines six eras of Western agriculture as it evolved from the Middle Ages to the present; its geographical and historical context is therefore vast. As Lytton Strachey wrote in the preface to one of his own historical explorations, the authors have
“rowed out over the great ocean of material and lower[ed] down into it, here and there, a little bucket, which will bring up to the light of day some characteristic specimen, from those far depths, to be examined with a careful curiosity.”