

PORTFOLIO

Cathy
Read



Cathy Read

Contemporary Artist

About Cathy

Cathy Read re-imagines iconic architecture using explosive, colourful drops and trails of paint, held together with a structure of white lines. Inspired by looming and dramatic architecture. She draws on influences from various cities in the UK. In a previous life she worked as an Occupational Therapist using large art projects to help develop manual skills in children.

Cathy is self-taught. Her earlier paintings were predominantly circle based abstracts. Later developing into urban landscapes, fuelled by a lifelong interest in buildings. A natural evolution after a childhood dominated by giant decaying mills in the North of England's Cotton industry

Cathy exhibits her paintings around the UK, and Europe, and is in collections as far afield as Canada, Africa and New Zealand. Her painting of St Catherine's College Quad is in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. The piece was commissioned by Oxford University Press, to illustrate the 2016 Oxford Almanack.

Cathy Read is a member of the Society of Women Artists exhibiting with them in London since 2013, receiving the Barbara Tate Memorial Award in 2015. Cathy has also shown with the Royal Watercolour Society and the Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolour in London. In 2021 she is participating in an International Exhibition at Chiba City Art Museum in Japan.

Cathy appeared as a contestant on Sky Arts Landscape Artist of the Year in 2016. Returning as a wildcard in 2017. The same year, she was shortlisted for Artist and Illustrators Artist of the Year and received the Wild and Tame award.

Contact

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1 - Library Vibes

Watercolour and Acrylic ink
76 x 56 cm

£1,334.00

DESCRIPTION

Visual Music

You can't see music although artists have tried to show it. If I were to try to describe this busker's music, it would talk of warm, rich colours, fusions of mellow browns and golds. The colours are rich and deep, like the music from the saxophone. The musician was deep in thought, focusing on making glorious sounds come out of the belly of the Golden Horn. Although it may have been silver, I can't remember, and the photo is ambiguous. I'm choosing gold because it suits the sounds and my memory of the scene.

Busker by Central Library

A typical street scene with a busker and Manchester's Central library as the backdrop. Two women wander along, they would have been referred to as "old biddies", in the callow term from my youth. Not that I would use that term now. I suspect they were friends or an elderly mother and her middle aged daughter, and, oblivious to the melody, they pass by deep in conversation. Behind them, a parent attends to a distressed infant in a buggy. The memorial and background are created as passing thoughts. The main focus of this painting is the man with the horn.

The Air of Love



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2 - Liverpool Street Station

Watercolour and Acrylic ink

52.5 x 73.5 cm

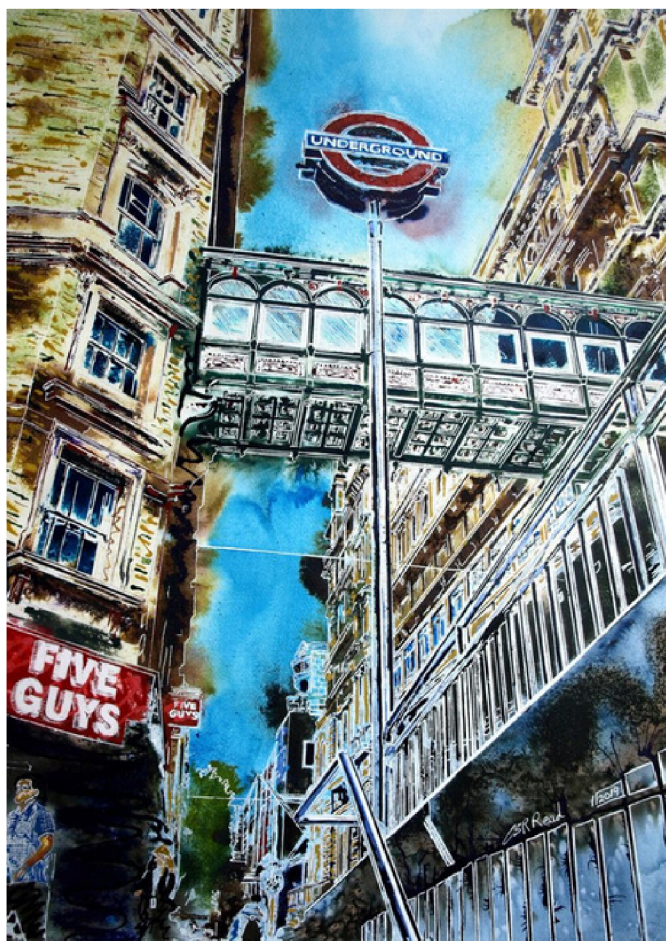
£1,344.00

DESCRIPTION

On a damp cold winter evening outside Liverpool Street Station you look up at the inky dark sky and the bright lights of the Station. Pausing to take in the scene, in spite of your eagerness to continue the journey. The brash lighting has a greenish glow in the tunnel. A pale blue halo forms around the principle light, bright against the indigo night. Twin Towers guard the entrance with an illuminated clock face indicating the time of Midnight, that must be wrong, right? For below the station is alive, we can only see a few people, but many more will pass us as they focus on their own journeys and thoughts of arriving home, or somewhere else. Is it better or worse? Wouldn't you like to know?



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3 - Charing Cross Station

Watercolour and Acrylic ink
74.5 x 53.3 cm

£1,334.00

DESCRIPTION

A Bright Red Underground sign perches on top of a shiny pole. Standing like a lollipop, it virtually splits the painting down the middle. You see it towering overhead, as you look up from the underground entrance. Silver railings on the right break up your view of the street. The back of the Amba Hotel in Charing Cross, obvious from the ornate walkway that bridges the gap between the buildings on the third floor. They didn't spare the detail on this one. Ornate to a point of vulgarity perhaps? Whatever your taste, the Amba Hotel's a building that's hard to ignore. Although I wonder?

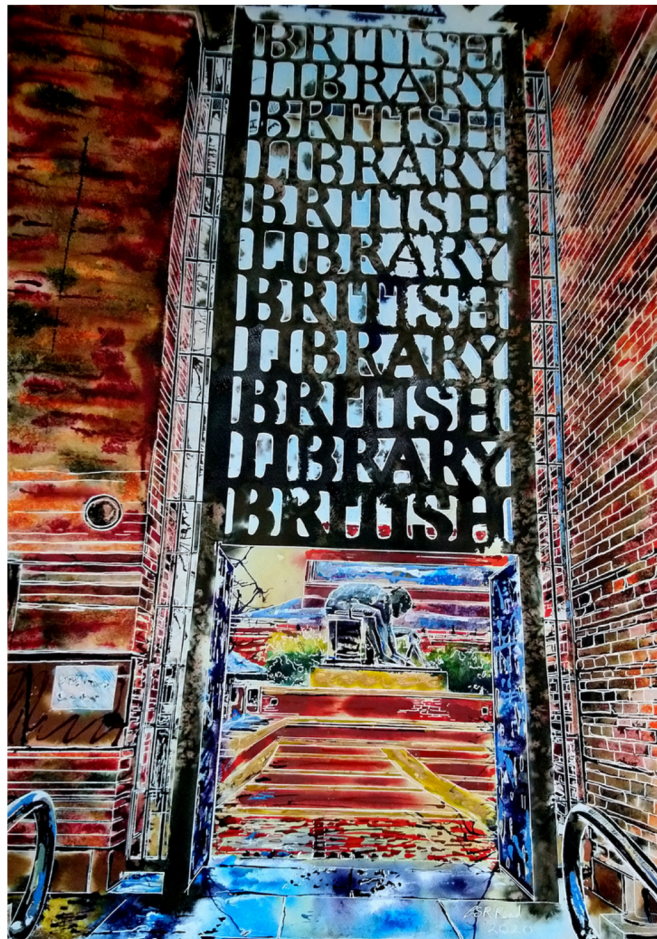
Have you noticed that people walk around cities in a trance? They spend years on the same commute and that makes them move automatically. Apart from the need to check for traffic, your average commuter misses most things, unless their attention is drawn to it by an unusual event.

The lollipop underground sign is framed by the buildings against a deep cerulean sky. Colours have bled from the walls and other details. Tinges of pink, brown and ochre struggle for attention, but that blue dominates. A few people mingle in the street, merging into the buildings. You hardly notice the blond girl or the youth with a back pack. Look closely at the image, the structure on the right is drawn in such detail that there remains little of the colour. Contrast it with the walls above the Five Guys building. The windows are defined but the walls are streaks of colour.

Brickwork, a mere suggestion, but you see bricks. Reflections on stainless steel of the railings and the windows of the walkways show the outside world but there's no hint at what lies behind the glass. In some cases the windows show darkness, the



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4 - British Library

Watercolour and Acrylic ink
75 x 53.3 cm

£1,344.00

DESCRIPTION

When looking at this British Library gates painting, the first thing you notice are the words British Library repeated in a rising stack. Each layer upwards the font becomes more delicate and light. It's as if the lower levels need to be reinforced to hold the weight of those further up. This ironwork creation marks the entrance to the British Library and continues onto the doors which open inwards. Held in place either side by a simple rectangular grating.

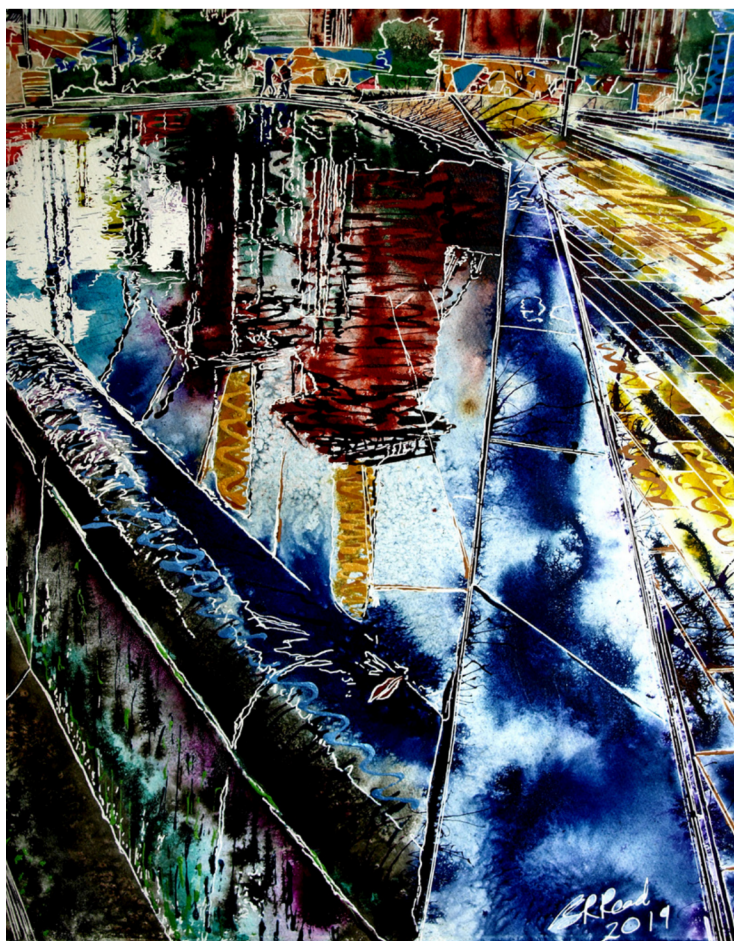
What could be a more appropriate symbol for the library can there be but a stack of words? Like a stack of books. Eloquent and simple. The clarity of the words increases as your eyes scans up. The density of the black increases as you go down.

The image feels slightly crooked. The reference photo was taken when passing on a rainy October day. I chose not to straighten it. It helps capture the spontaneity of the image and adds to the sense of looming in the structure.

The dark entrance looks through to a terracotta pathway framed with gold. Once you go beyond the English words, it feels like the entrance to an oriental temple. The text leaves you in no doubt of where you are. Framed by the gates with its Iron grid of letters. Centre stage, a giant figure bends double, intent on this "work". He holds a pair of compasses or dividers with the skill and delicacy of practised hands. His task, whatever it is, demands his full attention. He's oblivious to our presence.



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5 - Battersea Reflections

Watercolour and Acrylic ink

52 x 41 cm

£740.00

DESCRIPTION

At first it's hard to figure out what you're looking at in this image. Painting Battersea Power Stations Reflections in a mirror like pool. I say mirror-like because it's almost smooth, but not quite. Gentle ripples ride across the surface as a delicate breeze disrupts the surface. The water flows along the left hand side, gliding over the edge. A constant flow, the liquid rippling at the precipice before plunging into the channel below. There to disappear. Presumably there's a pump that circulates the water, but it's not visible here.

The surface reflects the Battersea Power station framed in this strange polygon of a pool, not square and not triangular. The inverted riverside chimneys glow brightly in the cool blue waters. On the right wall of the pond is a broad flat structure. I wonder how many children have used it as their own personal pathway? The power station itself is hard to distinguish amidst the ripples. Walls and scaffolding merge together in a red/brown haze.

In the distance you can make out the figures as people mill around going about their business.

Look closely and you'll see blooms of ink and jagged trails as the iridescent ink had been layered on top of previous washes and colour explosions.

Order and chaos prevail. The structured lines providing a scaffolding to splurges of



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6 - Cultural Exchange

Watercolour and Acrylic ink
56.2 x 77.5 cm

£1,497.00

DESCRIPTION

Cultural Exchange. Remember London scenes like these? People milling around in close proximity. I'm sure they will return. But wearing more masks. Our culture has changed, and only time will tell what the new normal will be. Why call the painting 'Cultural Exchange'?

We're outside the National Gallery in London. A true mecca for cultural lovers.

The numbers do not lie. On average 6 million people visit its infamous halls each year, ranking as the UK's second most popular tourist attraction. Worldwide, it is the 7th most popular visitor attraction. This should come as no surprise as the gallery curates treasured cultural artifacts – paintings and sculptures spanning centuries.

As usual, tourists from across the globe bunch outside hoping to enjoy these artistic culture within the building. But 'Cultural Exchange' also depicts many other 21st century cultural artifacts – smartphones, clothes, travel, architecture, and even Pikachu. Pikachu is a cultural icon from the manga tradition, which is popular worldwide, especially amongst the younger generations.

Cultural exchange is an ongoing and necessary part of life. Exchanges create a



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7 - Check Mate

Watercolour and Acrylic ink
41.3 x 50.8 cm

£740.00

DESCRIPTION

Checkmate.
Posted on by Cathy

Contrasts feature heavily in my paintings and never more so than in Checkmate. The two tall elegant structures on opposite sides of the Thames, reminded me of chess pieces on a board. Two Kings, in a game of wits.

The dark organic form of the lamppost base. We don't even see the whole of this lamppost due to its proximity. Two fish-like creatures entwine each other, and the pole. Their faces looking down the river. Scales cover their bodies in a textured mass of detail. Above them the decorations cover the pole. Flowers and ridges and the plinth below has more layers and more detail.

Deep dark colours, from black to blues and browns, hide much of the shaping. White lines, the only relief, picking out the shapes and details, so we can see what it is. The lamppost dominates in a menacing way. The eyes of the fish watch you. Mouth open, gasping for air. It looks angry, it wants to leap back into the Thames, and swim away. It's alive!

The Shard, by contrast, is light and distant, both physically and metaphorically. It is lifeless. Smooth in texture. Shiny and reflecting the light, and buildings around it.



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8 - Fortnum and Mason

Watercolour and Acrylic ink

89 x 60 cm

£1,657.00

DESCRIPTION

Fortnum and Mason

The Fortnum and Mason painting's a busy painting this one. Lots of colour and texture everywhere. Two main colours dominate, orange/brown and blue/green. The scene is Fortnum and Mason on Piccadilly, a long-established, respectable firm with a reputation reaching back a few centuries to 1707. The Clock dominates and looks incongruous - French Louis XVI style against English neoclassical. They jar. You'd be forgiven for thinking the clock was ancient, part of the long history of the building but you'd be wrong. It first appeared in 1964 and quickly became a recognisable feature of the store. Located, as it is, in such a prominent location of the main entrance, you'd be hard pushed to miss it.

In contrast, the sculpture below King and Queen by Lynn Chadwick is a newcomer, a positive up-start. It was a temporary feature in 2016 when art came to the London store courtesy of Frank Cohen.

I love the contrast between the curlicues of the clock the dated baroque style in contrast to the Modernist angular shapes of the King and Queen. Mottled green texture besides gilded flourishes, pastel green with painted details of lush green and red. Top that with a profusion of gold. The building itself is ordered and regimented above but descends into flourishes and flounces below the awning. Colours ranging from brick reds, plum purples and ice blues and far too much viridian than should ever be allowed in any single painting.

The clock itself is beyond description. Kitch in the extreme, it has a feeling of over the top extravagance. The pastel green with white details and gilding. The ridiculous



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9 - Marylebone Station

Watercolor
61 x 51
cm

£1,048.00

DESCRIPTION

A patchwork of yellow and orange permeates your vision, taking your eyes down and to the left. Then, "Oh No!" there's more hiding in the middle right.

The sassy taxi shouts "Look at me! Bet you can't ignore my rich red tones and gorgeous reflective surfaces." The black car is trying to creep out of sight and the small purple one begins to vanish in the middle.

The whole scene is dominated by an elaborate glass roof. Heavy, bold, with hints of delicate scroll-work in the iron trusses. Colours fight for attention saying "Have you seen me?" "No Me!" and your eye darts around as you discover new hitherto unseen elements. The traffic cone, the radiator grille. What's that behind the purple car in the middle? It looks like a dress? You look at the brick pavement. Then wonder, Did she draw everyone? What's that on the road? Can I make it out what it says? What's that post there? Can you see those blue highlights? And look at those trials of ink. OK calm down! Breathe...

There's so much energy and movement, you want to sit quietly until the calmness returns.

Then you're off again. Where is everybody? Can I make out the taxi driver? Hang on what colour IS that car? I thought it was black but now i see hints of blue.



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10 - London Eye

Watercolour and Acrylic ink on board
91.5 x 61 cm

£1,687.00

DESCRIPTION

About London Eye

The size demands attention. There is an instant "Look at me!" sense as the image burns itself on your consciousness. This is no subtle piece. The strong colours and complex textures call for your attention. There's energy and movement. The orange and red snakes their way up the paper. As you look, you see the tension in the cables holding the wheel's shape. You can see it's a wheel but what looks like the upright section is fighting to stretch itself forward. To uncoil itself from captivity and forge a new path.

The cars are bold and detailed lower down but as they become distant their size and definition vanish and merge with a massive structure of the wheel. The delicate structure of the wheel criss crosses its way upward in an arc of optimism. The base contrast the brilliant colours and delicate structures with earthy solid tones that speak of strength and dependability.

A marriage between masculine and feminine strength. The strength of solid heavy weight next to the strength of structure and unity. The individual components working together to form a strong and dependable Ferris wheel. Each part would fail on its own but together they provide strength and beauty. A fine example of how the whole is more than the sum of its parts.



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11 - Natural History Graffiti

Watercolour and Acrylic ink

89 x 61 cm

£1,657.00

DESCRIPTION

The first thing you notice about Natural History Graffiti is the towering edifice looming above you. It seems to go on forever. Drawing your eyes up to the molten sky, like they're alien rocks or Meteors hurled across space. The sky is simultaneously fluid and cracked like a parched ground.

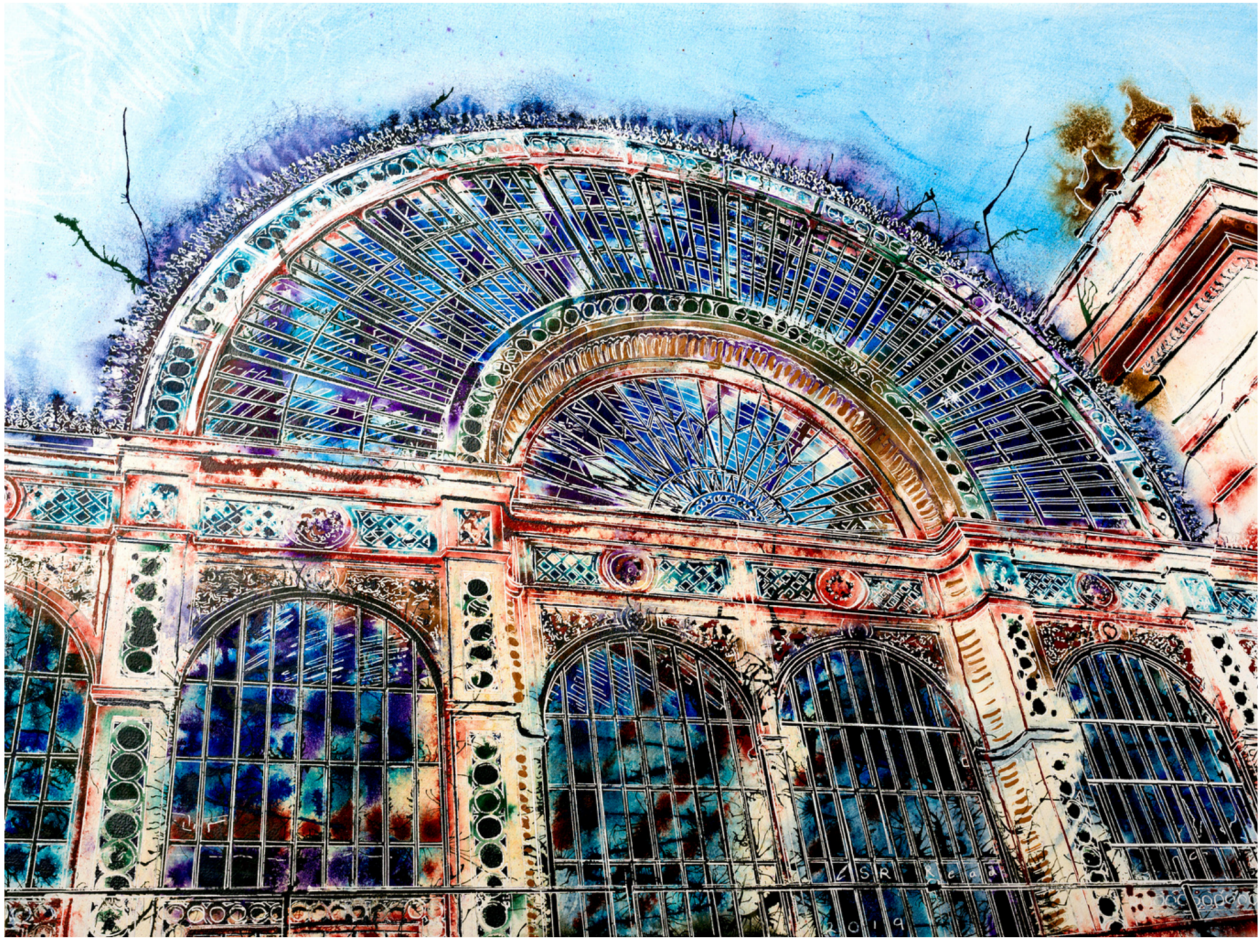
Snaking across are fluid strokes, sprayed, graffiti-like, to break up the crazed blue surface. Blues and purples, swirling in masses, break into stars of light blue and lavender.

The Tower itself stretches to the sky, details disappearing as your eyes scan upwards. Then travelling back down, the colours pulsate with a vibrant richness. Golden yellows, jewel like blues and reds call out with deep blues and greens clashing. Trying to rein back the colour but the vibrant colours win the day.

Once you get past the colour, the details emerge. Organic textures feature contrasting the smooth reflections in the glass. Scales cling on the twisted columns, regimented leaves frame the windows and a small lion stands guard watching for signs of trouble. Vines and flowers cap the scaly columns, a patchwork of colour.



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12 - Royal Opera House

Watercolour and Acrylic ink

£1,344.00

DESCRIPTION

Royal Opera House

The Royal Opera House painting shows the impressive side of the building. With a name like that you expect it to be grand and it doesn't disappoint.

A fan window, of grand proportions, practically fills the painting. Like a fan, its spars are visible and clearly defined, as is the decoration. You can see through the panes to the roof behind and above. Delicate but strong, allowing light to flood the space below.

Decoration is crammed into every feature. Lattice work, lace edges, circles, keystoneing, rebates etc. You have to look away, the senses are so overwhelmed.

There's a muted rainbow of colour everywhere you look. Deep reds, blues and greens sit happily adjacent to one another. The colours are not fighting to be seen, but wait patiently until you notice them. Give them time and you will notice them. How many can you count?

On a building as heavily decorated as this, it's easy to miss details. Like the diagonal spars on the central window that form little kite shapes fanning out from the central hub Or the carved details either side of the arched windows. Details emerge and blend into the background as you focus your attention for a while. Then look away



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13 - South Bank City Hall

Watercolour and Acrylic ink

55.6 x 77 cm

£1,344.00

DESCRIPTION

City Hall, is a curious structure. Like an alien helmet, or Egyptian one maybe, squatting in this painting of the south bank of the Thames. Set apart in a space of its own. It needs space, so that you can appreciate its outline and shape. Glorious glass, reflecting light everywhere. Jewelled colours sparkle here and there. The colours exaggerated, but present. The diamond patterns at the front, draw focus, created by the supports. The layers of Windows draw lines around the shape, leading the eye to the diamond pattern at the centre front. Here it's on our left but the shapes leave us in no doubt, this is the centre. Like a hoard of arrows pointing to the way in.

In the foreground a gantry slopes down to the left, waiting to take people on a journey. Where might it go and on which boat. A glimpse is all we have are the River Thames, hidden behind the gantry. The riverbank exposed is rough and stony a high wall fronts. The South Bank itself. Blooms of earthy colours remind me of moss and slime found on rocks.

The South Bank is busy. Crowds mill around some chatting, while others are admiring the view. Small groups in a variety of poses. Heading upstairs, consulting phones, waiting for friends. They appear antlike from this distance. Scurrying around enjoying leisure time by the river, some working, perhaps.

What else do you see happening in the painting South Bank City Hall?



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14 - *Reflected Glory*

Watercolour and Acrylic ink
39.5 x 46.5 cm

£740.00

DESCRIPTION

Reflected Glory

For all its geometric lines, there's an organic feel to this painting. The earthy browns and leaf greens would be at home in a forest. Even the dark vertical band of black and blue suggests a mass of teeming, hairy, caterpillars edging their way out of sight.

You're looking at a wall. At first glance, it could be any wall in any city, but hints of its provenance will quickly announce a grander pedigree. A large block of green marble polished to a sheen. Brick work patterns of grooves in a style more commonly found in stone architecture. The profile on the edges of the shadows, indicating deep grooves. Like in carved masonry. It's a London wall.

Even the jet-black down-pipe has pretensions. Not round but square in profile. The connecting joint decorated with a seal, or Maker's Mark, it's hard to tell. Any other wall, would be just a wall. The bricks are weathered from decades of exposure to the elements. Sharp edges softened and eroded. No straight lines to be found here, well not many at least.

The wall is something that conveys opulence. Even though it's just a wall. Reflecting the glory of its creator, or rather the person, it was created for. There's no doubt, whoever it was the man, and it was most likely a man, wanted to make an



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15 - Ground Star

38 x 28

cm

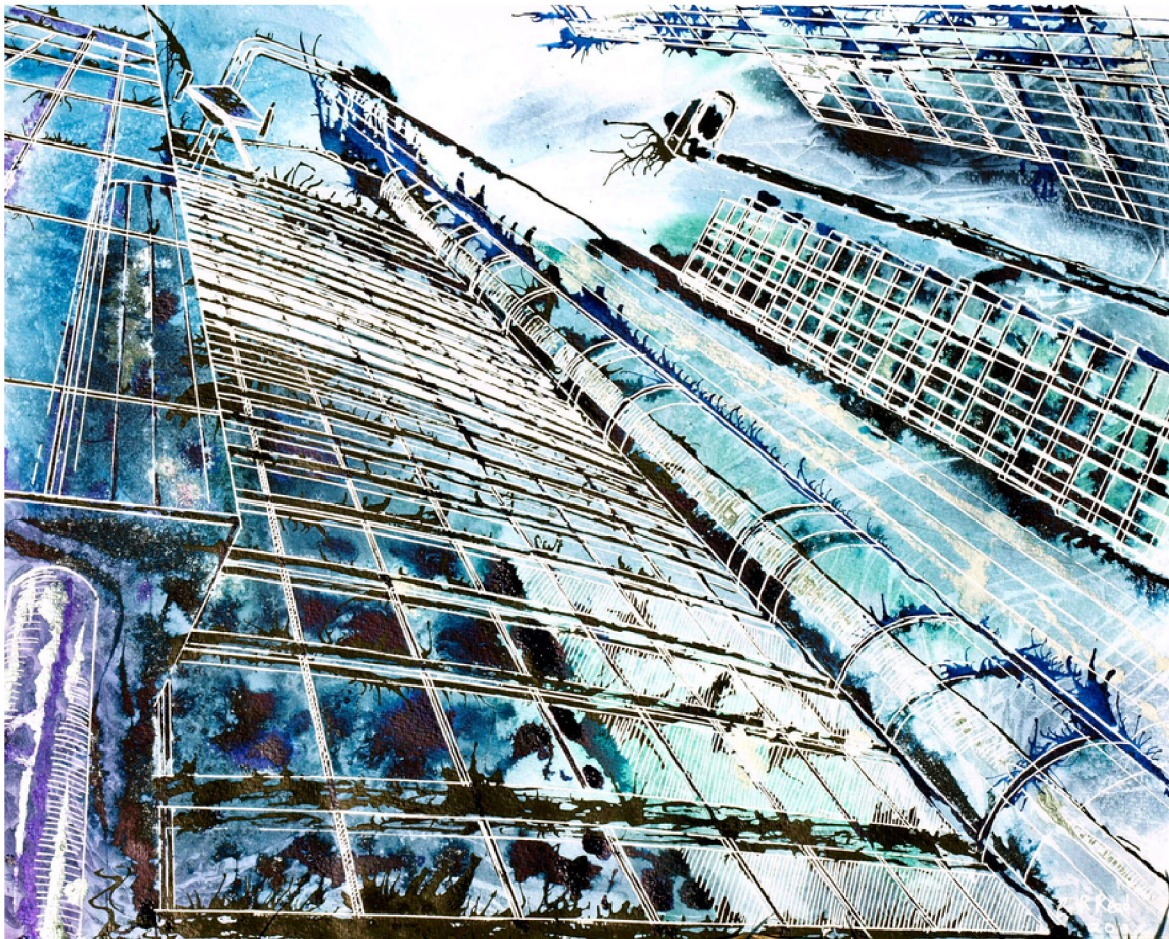
£520.00

DESCRIPTION

Ground Stars can be found everywhere, if you look carefully. These are the intersections of the supports on the surface of the Gherkin in London. It's a structure that inspires love or hatred. I personally think it is an inspired structure and skillfully executed. The light often catches the glass and look like stars on earth. Brilliant but impossible to reach.



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16 - Anonymous City

Watercolour and Acrylic ink
40 x 50 x 0.1 cm

£470.00

DESCRIPTION

Have you ever noticed how some areas of cities look like they could be any city? You could be anywhere in the world, but in a city you're struck by the height of the buildings. Sure, there are distinctive structures that help you identify where you are but many buildings are constructed in similar styles and as you look up in some areas you could be in anywhere.

This is one of those places

Creation

The picture is painted on watercolour paper. I draw the lines with masking fluid to a planned arrangement before painting it with a watercolour wash which gets covered with clingfilm. Once this is removed the picture is further developed using acrylic inks which are left to dry before the masking is removed to reveal the final picture.



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17 - Battersea Reborn

Watercolour and Acrylic ink
56 x 76 x 0.1 cm

£1,344.00

DESCRIPTION

Do you have a favourite building?

Maybe there's a romantic connection? Or it inspires you because of its beauty? Battersea Power Station might be an unlikely favourite building, but it captures the imagination of many and is a popular subject matter for art.

I first saw it on an album cover in the 70's and was intrigued. The artwork by Storm Thorgusson, on Pink Floyd's *Animals*, has a gritty industrial feel. Later, as an occupational therapy student on placement in Clapham and then South Croydon I would pass it on the train. Let's just say it impressed me. So when I started illustrating architecture, painting Battersea Power station was already on the "Must do" list.

The reference image was taken just after work had started on the development of the site into luxury apartments

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The picture was initially drawn with pencil onto watercolour paper. These lines were then drawn over using masking fluid and then painted using watercolour paint and acrylic ink. Salt was also used in the process and some of the ink blown around using a straw. Once the painting was dry the masking fluid was removed to reveal the finished painting. The picture is 56cm high by 76cm wide and was created in England in 2015.



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18 - Gracechurch Street

Watercolour and Acrylic ink
40 x 50 cm

£740.00

DESCRIPTION

Grace Church Street. The buildings in this painting of Gracechurch Street loom overhead. You'll be forgiven for thinking what church is this? It seems like you're gazing on a clock tower but far from it. The clock is suspended on the wall, from a curved iron bracket in the foreground. The hour is 2:40pm and the second hand is frozen in time, never to advance or mark the passage of minutes and hours. Capturing this moment for eternity. The Roman numerals are clear on its white dial. The hands like tiny arrows, ready to spring forward. The painting is divided in two in the middle. One half cold and the other hot. Or maybe it's old and new? Or constrained and spacious? The dark windows on the fake tower are interrupted by a street light, which blends into the detail. Hidden until you suddenly notice its presence. Then suddenly lost again. As you wonder what else you can find. There's a stack of bay windows picked out iridescent blue and black. Raw sienna, and yellow ochre, provide the warmth and contrast with the turquoise blue of the sky. And what a sky it is! Swirling blue shapes created by cling film in the painting process, give it an almost mosaic feeling. And the mosaic is more real, when you look at the building in the bottom left quarter. Gleaming white in the sun, with windows picked out in deep indigo. Pieced together like the tiny stones of a Roman floor. Shading lines, soften the colour to help define the details. Their angle, bringing your eyes full circle to the main buildings, and their effort to persuade you. This is a clock tower. And I've been misleading you all the time. Look closely at the textures. The fine tendrils of colour exploding from the white building, and the iron bracket on the clock. There are a few other places, but these are the ones that capture your



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19 - *Light at the End of the Tunnel*

Watercolour and Acrylic ink

50.3 x 40.5 cm

£740.00

DESCRIPTION

The light at the end of the tunnel

Much of the painting is dark blues and purples
but I see galaxies of stars in violet and indigo
with tiny suns of ocre and swirling masses of spiraling stars.

There's a cage like structure where the building leads your eye
to the brilliant patch of light in the centre.

The church dominates,
it's red and white stripes dazzling compared to the depth of darkness they contrast
with..

There are figures scurrying around in the gloom.

Hints of a child with parents, maybe a couple on the left
or is it a lone dark shadowy figure which merges into the deep blue?
Even the tendrils are caged and restrained by white linear bars.

Then there's that "church", but it's not just a church, it's Westminster Cathedral.
Prominently framed by the surrounding architecture.

Boldly absorbing all the light,

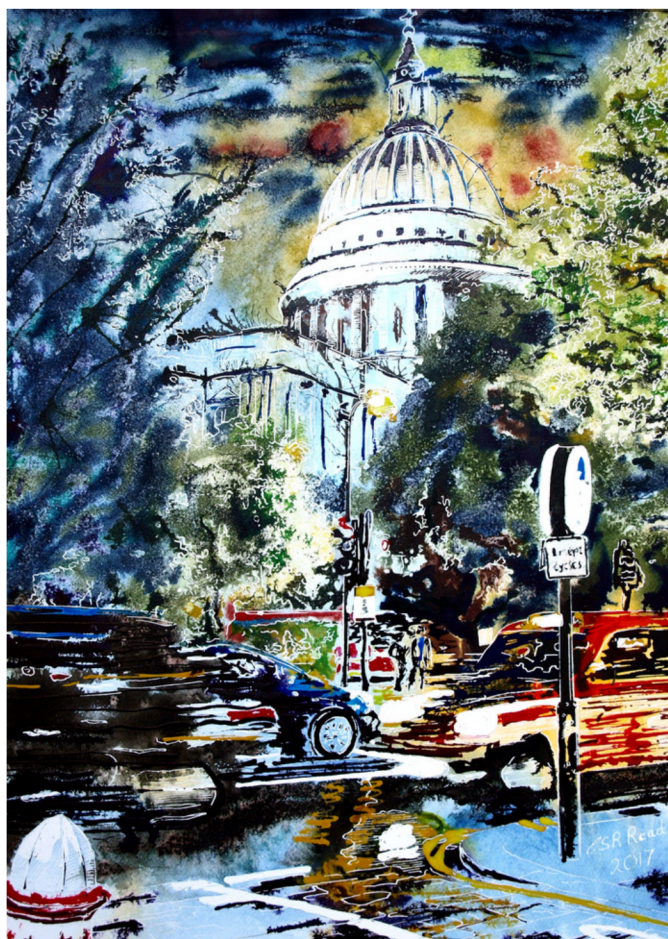
Or is it reflecting light outwards to guide the way?

A Beacon in the darkness, perhaps?

I'll let you decide...



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20 - St Paul's at night

Watercolour and Acrylic ink
76 x 56 cm

£1,344.00

DESCRIPTION

Not so much a snapshot in Time this painting conveys the passing of time. Areas of clear and sharp, like St Paul's Cathedral and the cycle marks on the road in the foreground but most of the painting is textures and blurs as Traffic speeds on its way between the phases of the traffic lights.

The blue car waits at the Red. The evening is clear and the sun is setting after a period of heavy rain The wet roads reflecting the sky and street-lights in that rippled fashion characteristic of moving cars causing frequent disturbances in puddles. Night is drawing in but, like many cities London, is never fully dark at night. From humble street and vehicle lights to the spotlights proudly defining St Paul's Cathedral, illumination is everywhere. Dark masses of trees obscure large areas but cannot fully cancel the brightness.

Notice the couple in the centre walking towards you? Perhaps having just stopped off at the red bus disappearing to the left. behind the foliage. Greenery that nearly dwarfs St Paul's. The foreground is calm - nothing to see here. A sign marking the cycle route and for traffic to give way.

Pause and watch London life hurtles past and there and then it's gone in an instant. Only to be replaced as something new and equally fascinating catches your attention.

London changes but remains the same...

Busy, bustling and bright!



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Further art can be found at

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