



David Piddock

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At first, casual, glance the immaculate, architectural precision and clear, uncluttered surfaces of David Piddock's views, vistas and panoramas of London's riverscape seem to place his work very much within a tradition that stretches right back to the 18th Century - Canaletto and Samuel Scott's London views for example - all the way up to the photorealism of modern times, best typified in this country today perhaps by the icy glitter of Ben Johnson's paintings of both historical and contemporary interiors and townscapes or Clive Head's complex perspectival explorations of London's urban scene. But then, quietly, something rather different begins to emerge, altogether warmer and more playful, though just as thoughtful and serious about the kind of poetic wonder this way of painting can also begin to represent.

Certainly there are some often complex perspectival games going on in many of the larger paintings here – as well as the classic single-point, Renaissance-style perspective of *Greenwich Park* and the 180° viewpoint of *Albert Bridge*, there are now, in addition, the largely new mirror-images of works like *Give me Strength*, *Samson at Queenhithe*, *There and Back* and *Under the Bridge*. There are though, equally, a number of substantial works here which rely simply on a rather more straightforward compositional approach, the artist's preoccupations clearly more on the intriguing interplay of architectural forms and odd juxtapositions to be found. In, for example, *Triton at Jubilee Bridge* where the graceful, functional beauties of the Jubilee Bridge's diagonal white hausers and the hard, concrete horizontals of the footpath and also Waterloo Bridge behind, create a rich and intriguing interplay of compositional forms. Or, similarly, in *Whitehall Gardens*, where the hard, diagonal outlines of the concrete steps leading on to the Jubilee Bridge cut across the richly decorative verticals and horizontals of the Victorian structure supporting the Hungerford railway bridge. Such contrasts provide the basis of a whole series of similar studies of this very particular though often surprisingly overlooked stretch of London's everyday urban architecture in and around the Embankment. At a very simple level here too, Piddock is chronicling the rapid change that has overtaken this classic scene, already quite unrecognisable from a couple of decades or so back – not just the Jubilee Bridge itself but The Shard and all the similar high rises now dominating this scene -while at the same time reminding us that the 'old' London is never that faraway either.

At which point, almost as if to draw our eye's more careful attention to all this 'newness', Piddock then also does something utterly paradoxical, and wonderfully unexpected – he introduces an element of pure fantasy into the scene in the form of Renaissance and Antique (and in one case, Japanese) sculptural groups, the outcome of a lifetime of drawing in the British Museum, V & A and elsewhere. Thus the Triton in the painting *Embankment - Triton* is a direct transposition from Bernini's monumental group Triton and Neptune in the V & A, *Embankment - Sphinx* shows the colossal bust of King Anenemhat III in the Egyptian collection at the British Museum while lurking in *Under the Bridge* is an 18th Century Noh Mask, again from the V & A.

These 'introductions' should also begin to give us a clue as to how we might begin to understand Piddock's work at another level altogether to that simply of London 'views'. Writing to me in 2011, he observed that before the days of art college, in the early 80s, he drew inspiration from the likes of Palmer and Spencer, haunting his very own 'Valley of Vision'. That was well over 30 years ago now and while many other elements of 20th Century art have since found there way into his painting, From De Chirico to Balthus, at heart the fundamental reason for making paintings has not really changed as much as might at first be thought. All the perspectival devices, all the curiosities are there, in fact, to draw us into the work, first to show us what he has found and imagined , and then, as Paul Klee once simply observed, to allow the inevitable process of bringing our own experiences to the image. Here is his , 'Valley of Vision' - now it becomes ours as well.

Nicholas Usherwood



1. Give me Strength | Oil on gesso board | 123 x 153 cm





2. There and Back | Oil on gesso board | 122 x 173 cm





4. Theseus at Oystergate Walk | Oil on gesso board | 61 x 84 cm



5. Embankment - Sphinx | Oil on gesso board | 61 x 94 cm





6. Embankment - Apollo and Marsyas | Oil on gesso board | 61 x 89 cm



7. Embankment - Recumbent Youth | Oil on gesso board | 61 x 88 cm



8. Study - Waterloo Steps | Oil on gesso board | 14 x 19 cm



9. Study - Tate Modern | Oil on gesso board | 28 x 38 cm





10. Hanseatic Walk | Oil on gesso board | 60 x 117 cm



11. The Day Before | Oil on gesso board | 60 x 90 cm



12. Under the Bridge | Oil on gesso board | 61 x 183 cm





13. Whitehall Gardens | Oil on gesso board | 61 x 95 cm



14. Embankment - Mounted Head | Oil on gesso board | 61 x 92 cm





15. Greenwich Park | Oil on gesso board | 61 x 183 cm



16. Canary Wharf Bronze | Oil on gesso board | 59 x 34 cm



17. Study - Tate Modern silhouettes | Oil on gesso board | 34 x 60 cm









19. Albert Bridge | Oil on gesso board | 61 x 182 cm





21. King's Reach Memorial | Oil on gesso board | 39 x 59 cm

Selected Exhibitions

2015	Adam Gallery, Bath
2015	Gallery at Lloyds (register) City of London
2015	L P-S Open, London
2014	L P-S Open, London
2012	Threadneedle Open, London
2011	'The Perspective of Time' Adam Gallery, London
2009	14 paintings completed for the 'Azura' commissioned by P&O
2009	L P-S Open, London
2009	Gallery Windows, Canary Wharf, London
2008	'New Work', Adam Gallery, London and Bath
2007	L P-S Open, London
2006	L P-S Open, London (prize-winner)
2005	'New Work', Adam Gallery, London
2004	Palm Beach Contemporary Art Fair, USA / Adam Gallery
2003	Palm Beach Contemporary Art Fair, USA / Adam Gallery
2002	Fine Art Society Christmas Show, London
2002	Centro Modigliani, Florence
2002'	Gallery Pictures & Townscapes', Contra Fine Art / Gallery 27, London
2001	'New Acquisitions', The Museum of London
2000	'Blakes Heaven', Sclar Gallery / JHW, London
1999	'Gallery Fiction', The Fine Art Society, London
1997	Hunting Open, Royal College of Art
1997	Discerning Eye Exhibition, Mall Galleries
1997	Theatre Exhibition, JHW / Gallery 27
1996	Discerning Eye Exhibition, Mall Galleries
1996	The Fine Art Society, London
1996	The Gallery in Cork Street
1994	Great Elm Festival Art Exhibition
1994	Cadogan Gallery
1993	Spectator Open, Christies
1992	Hunting / Observer Open, Mall Galleries
1991	Royal Academy Summer Exhibition
1991	South Bank Open, Festival Hall
1990	'The Broad Horizon', Agnews
1989	New Contemporaries, Agnews
1987	'The Long Perspective', Agnews
1984	'Spirit of London', Royal Festival Hall
1983	Somerville College, Oxford
1983	Focus on Drawing, Museum of Modern Art, Oxford





