



JOHN DUFFIN

When John Duffin abandoned his career as a ship draughtsman and naval architect, his co-workers couldn't believe it. This was a job for life, promising security and travel. Why leave? The answer was simple: John was (is) an artist. His first love was fine art. His dream was to study. He knew from his first day in the drawing office aged 16, he had made a huge mistake. By aged 20, he was ready to correct it.

And so he did. In 1985, John exchanged his native Barrow for London Goldsmiths College where he studied alongside the group who would become known as the YBAs: Damien Hirst, Gary Hume, Ian Davenport, Fiona Rae, Sarah Lucas. His tutor there was Sir Michael Craig Martin who encouraged him to use his draughting skills and to make etchings to complement his paintings. It was all a very long way from the shipyards of the North West. And yet, in a way, John never completely left that drawing office. It remains in his work ethic and – most obviously – in his style and technique.

In an interview, John said: "Working 40 hours a week in an office topped up with nine hours of evening classes gave me a work discipline that has endured. I was also drawing shapes in first angle and third angle projection – and learning how to visualise space in an architectural manner. This would subconsciously return to me later when my work became more concerned with architecture and physical space in urban environments."

When John embarked on a full time career as a painter, he drew on his earliest inspiration: the classic American comic books he devoured as a child. John sought to emulate the virtuous draughtsmanship of legendary graphic novel artists such as Steve Ditko and Jack Kirby. This was combined with his love of cinematography and fine art painters such as Edward Hopper, Stanley Spencer and Edward Burra to forge a striking visual approach.

He also imported his drawing office technique. In preparing a new work, John will sketch dark pencil drawings from multiple angles, with different light sources at different times of day, creating a range of small potential compositions. When he fixes on 'the right one', he will revise in charcoal or black ink, before moving to watercolour, acrylic or oil.

But, of course, all of this is in the service of his artistic vision. John is preoccupied with the relationship between people and places. His work has a melancholy quality to it. He frequently depicts moody cityscapes at night, in which isolated characters cast long shadows and gaze into the distance. The perspective heightens the sense of drama, as the buildings loom ominously over the tiny figures below.

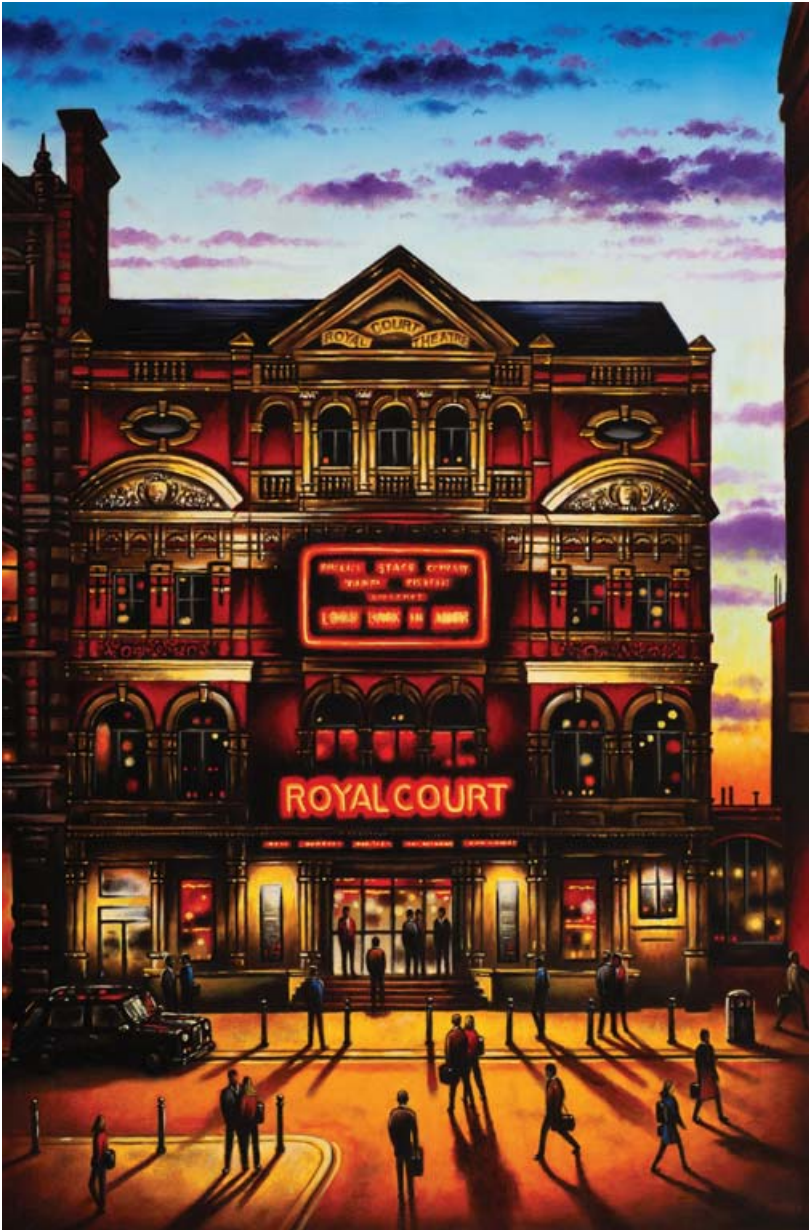
There are many excellent examples of this dynamic in John's new show – his sixth – for the Catto. BBC And All Souls Church and Night Match are two. Elsewhere, John retains the elevated perspective but adds the dramatic colours of sky and clouds to the overall effect. Manhattan Night, Greenwich Snow and others offer vivid illustrations of this approach. Finally, John brings the action indoors – while retaining his architectural lines – in the Bar Life series of paintings.

The new collection is a fine showcase for this unique artist and reveals the latest stage in a journey that began in that draughtsman's office 43 years ago. Today, John's work is held in many public collections such as the Ashmolean Museum Oxford, the Museum of London, the National Football Association and the Guildhall Library London. John has also won many prizes for his etching and painting including 'The Most Outstanding Print Award' chosen by Sir Peter Blake at the Originals National Open Print Exhibition.

Front Cover: W1A - BBC and All Souls Church, Langham Place, 102 x 76cm, Oil on Canvas



Brooklyn Bridge, Night, 51 x 76cm, Oil on Canvas



Royal Court, 76 x 51cm, Oil on Canvas



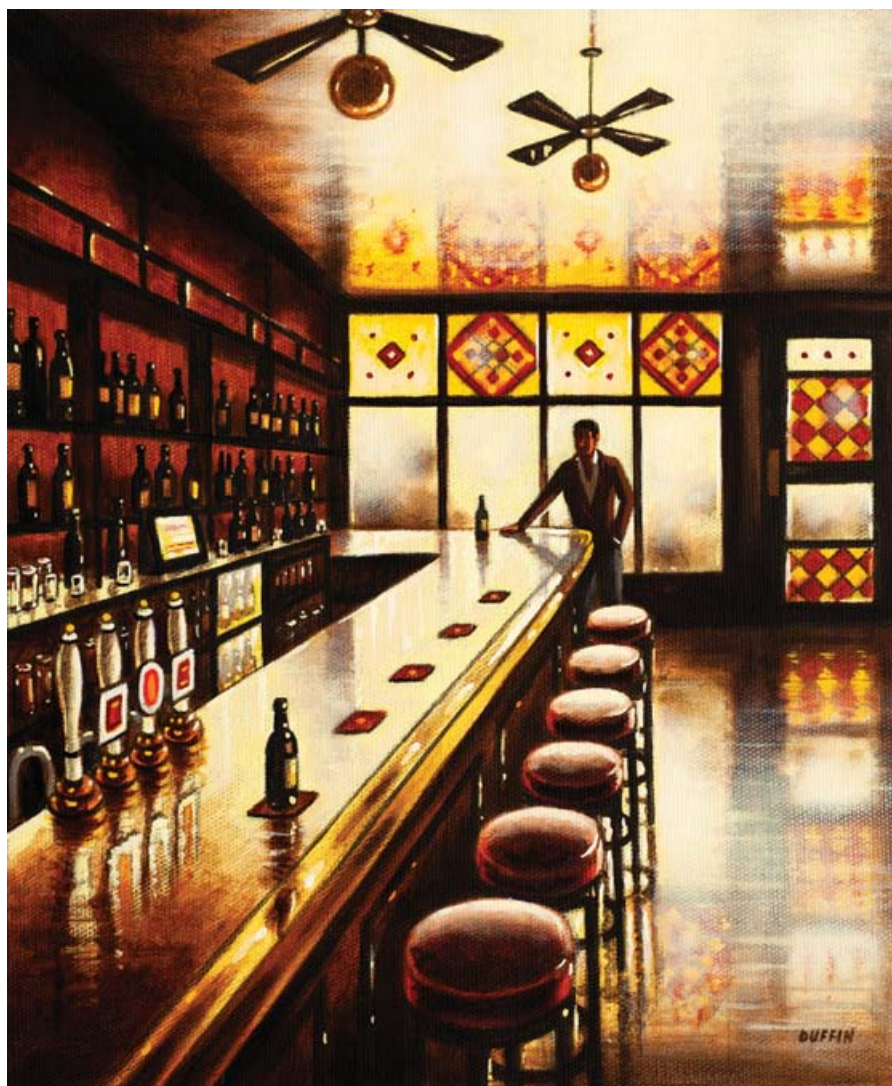
Michelin Night, 102 x 76cm, Oil on Canvas



De La Warr Pavilion, 38 x 56cm, Oil on Canvas



Midland Hotel, 56 x 38cm, Oil on Canvas



Bar Life 12, 30 x 25cm, Oil on Canvas



Bar Life 2, 30 x 25cm, Oil on Canvas



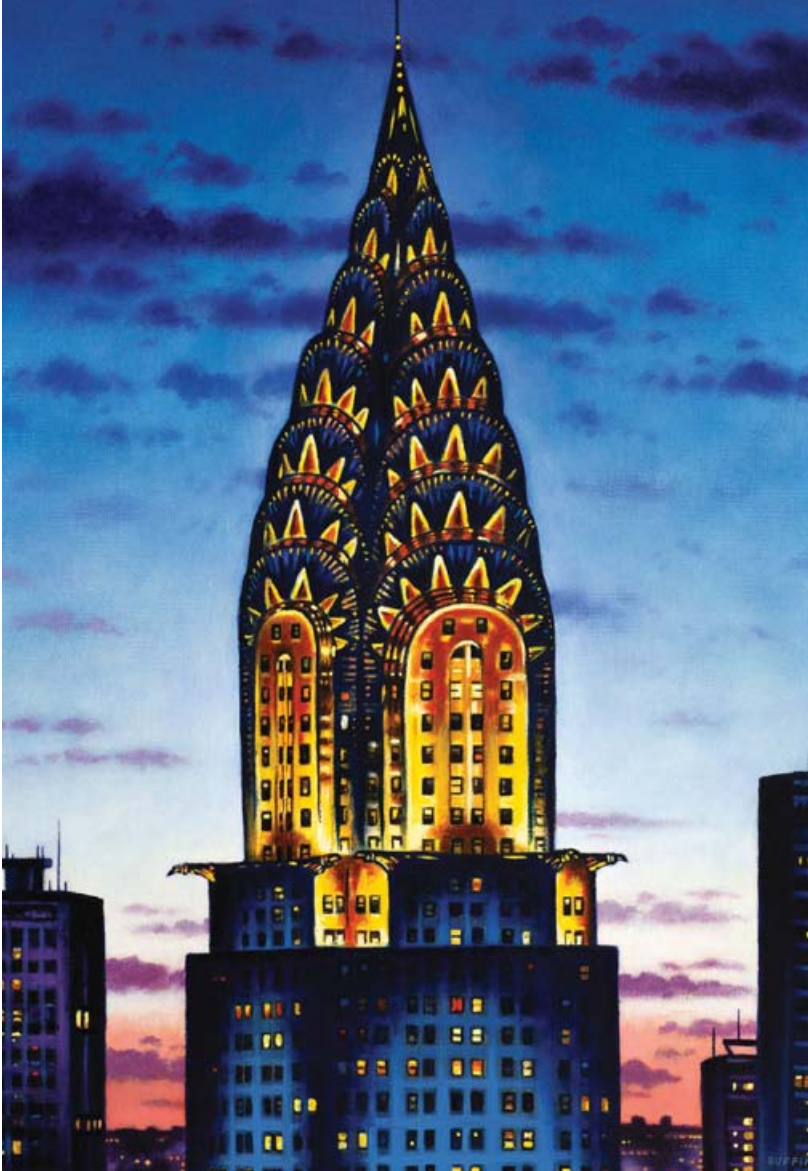
Greenwich, Snow, 76 x 122cm, Oil on Canvas



Blackheath, Snow, 76 x 122cm, Oil on Canvas



Empire State, 56 x 38cm, Oil on Canvas



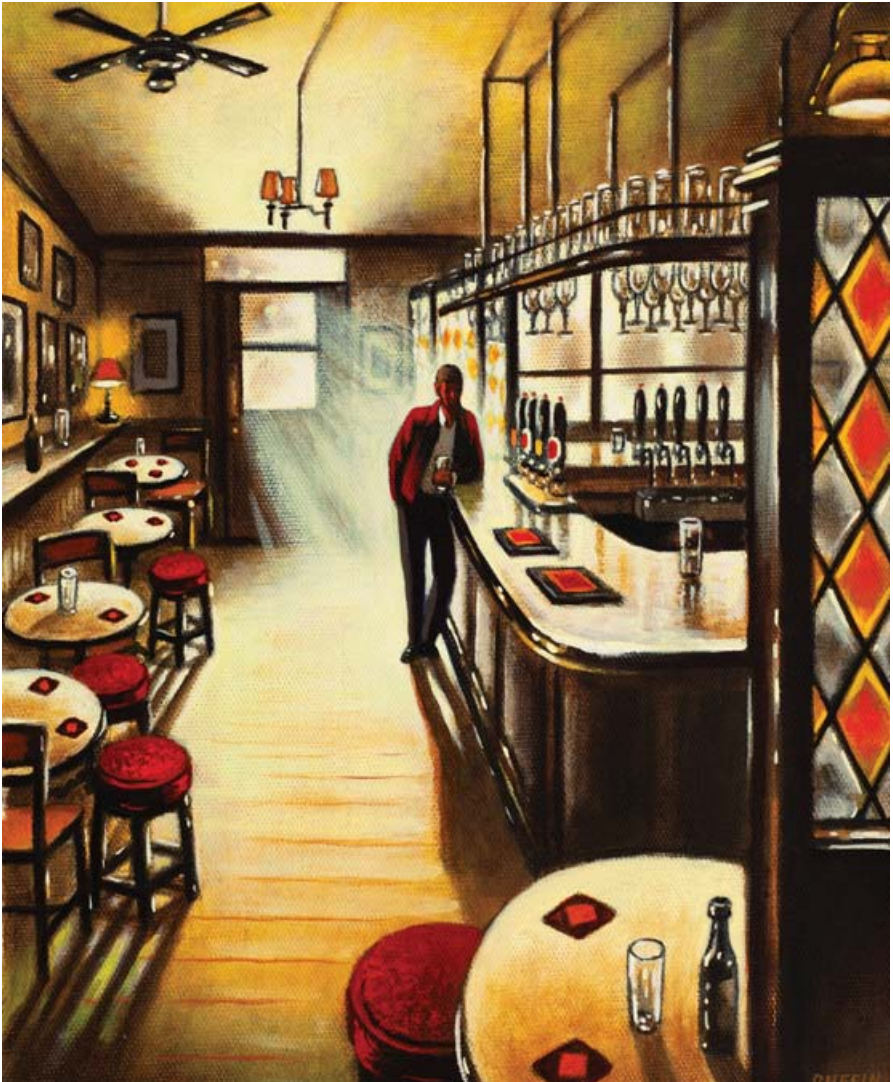
Chrysler Building, 56 x 38cm, Oil on Canvas



Grand Central Station, 56 x 38cm, Oil on Canvas



Flat Iron Building, 56 x 38cm, Oil on Canvas



Bar Life 4, 30 x 25cm, Oil on Canvas



Bar Life 7, 30 x 25cm, Oil on Canvas



Pleasure Beach, 56 x 38cm, Oil on Canvas



Daily Telegraph Building, 56 x 38cm, Oil on Canvas



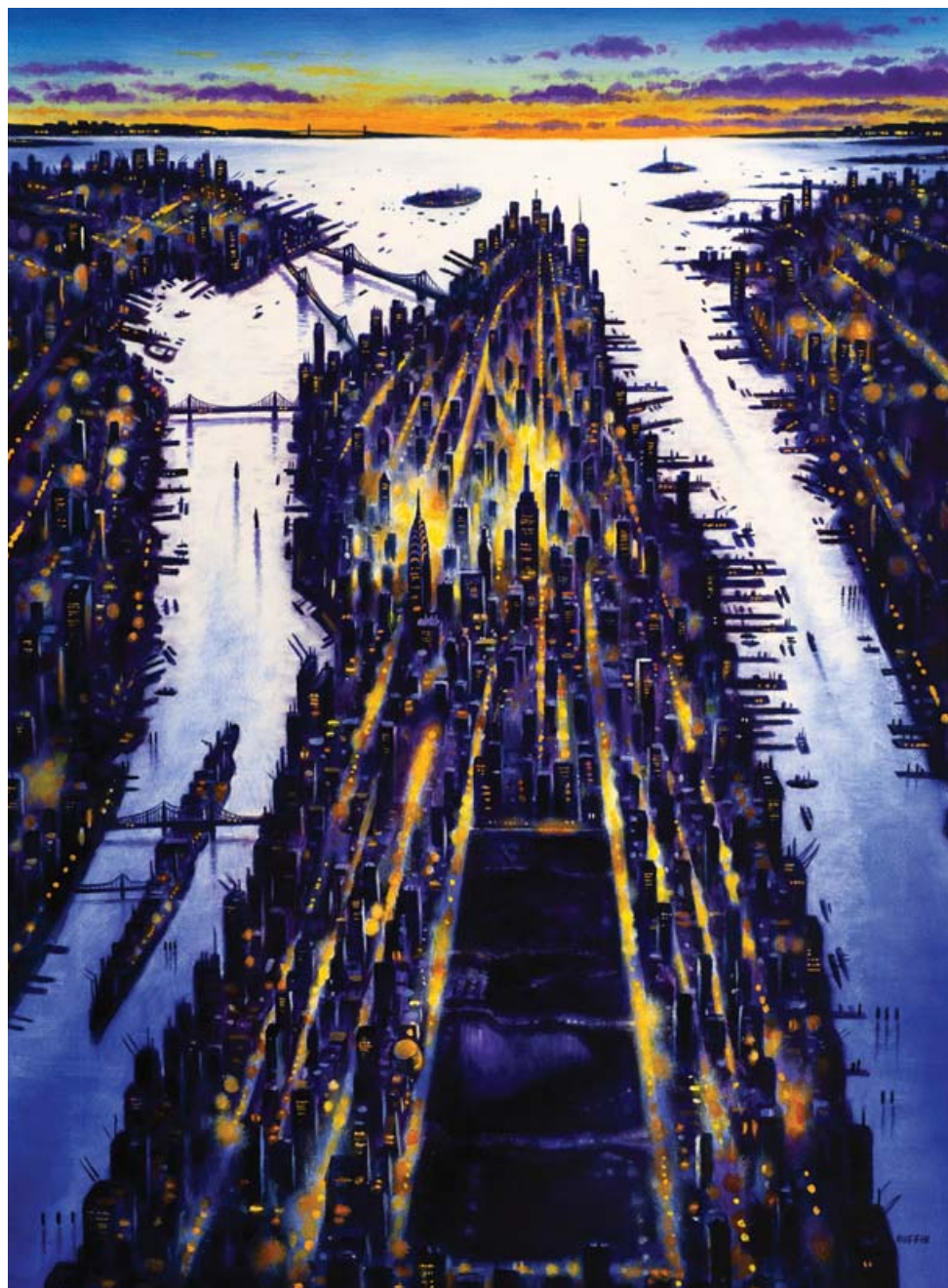
BFI Southbank, 76 x 51cm, Oil on Canvas



Waterloo Bridge, Sunset, 76 x 102cm, Oil on Canvas



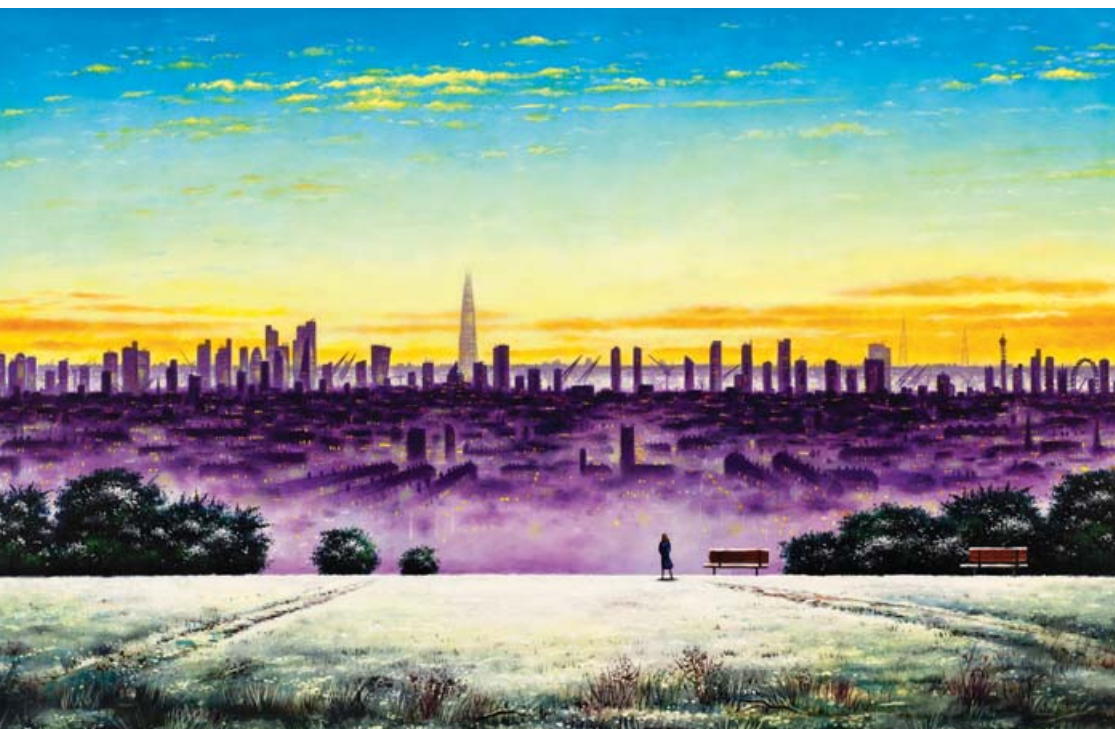
Manhattan Clouds, 76 x 56cm, Acrylic on Paper



Manhattan Night, 76 x 56cm, Acrylic on Paper



Primrose Hill, Snow, 76 x 122cm, Oil on Canvas



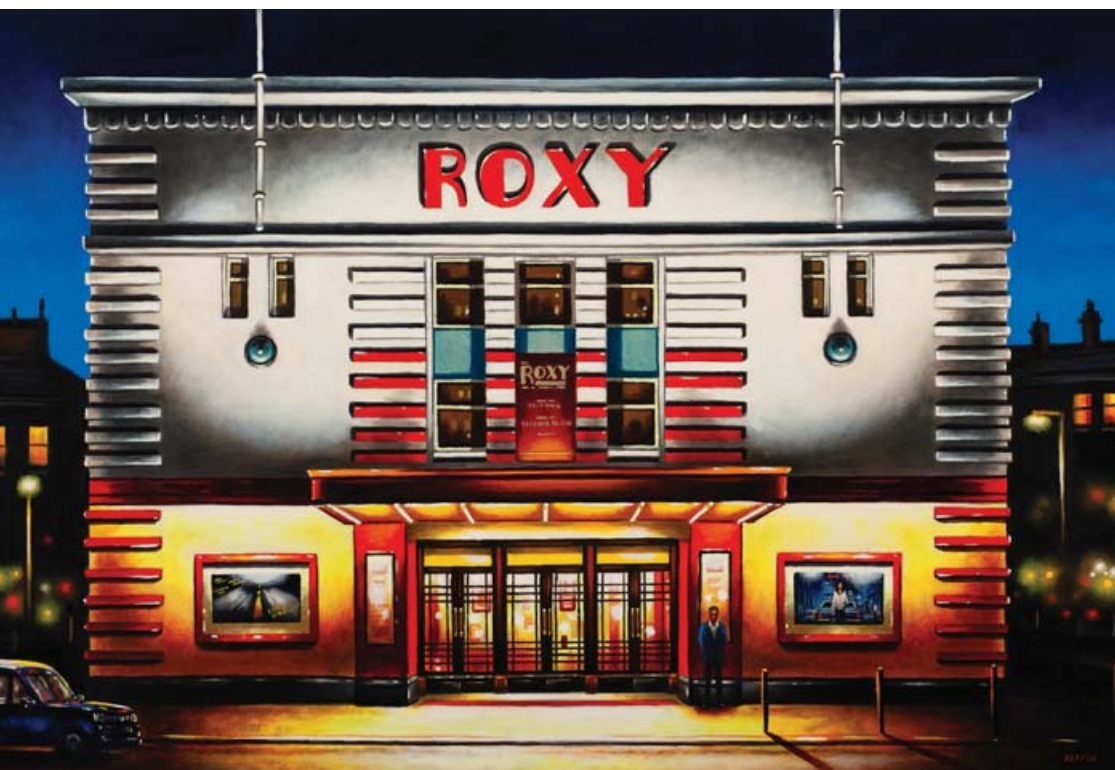
Parliament Hill, Snow, 76 x 122cm, Oil on Canvas



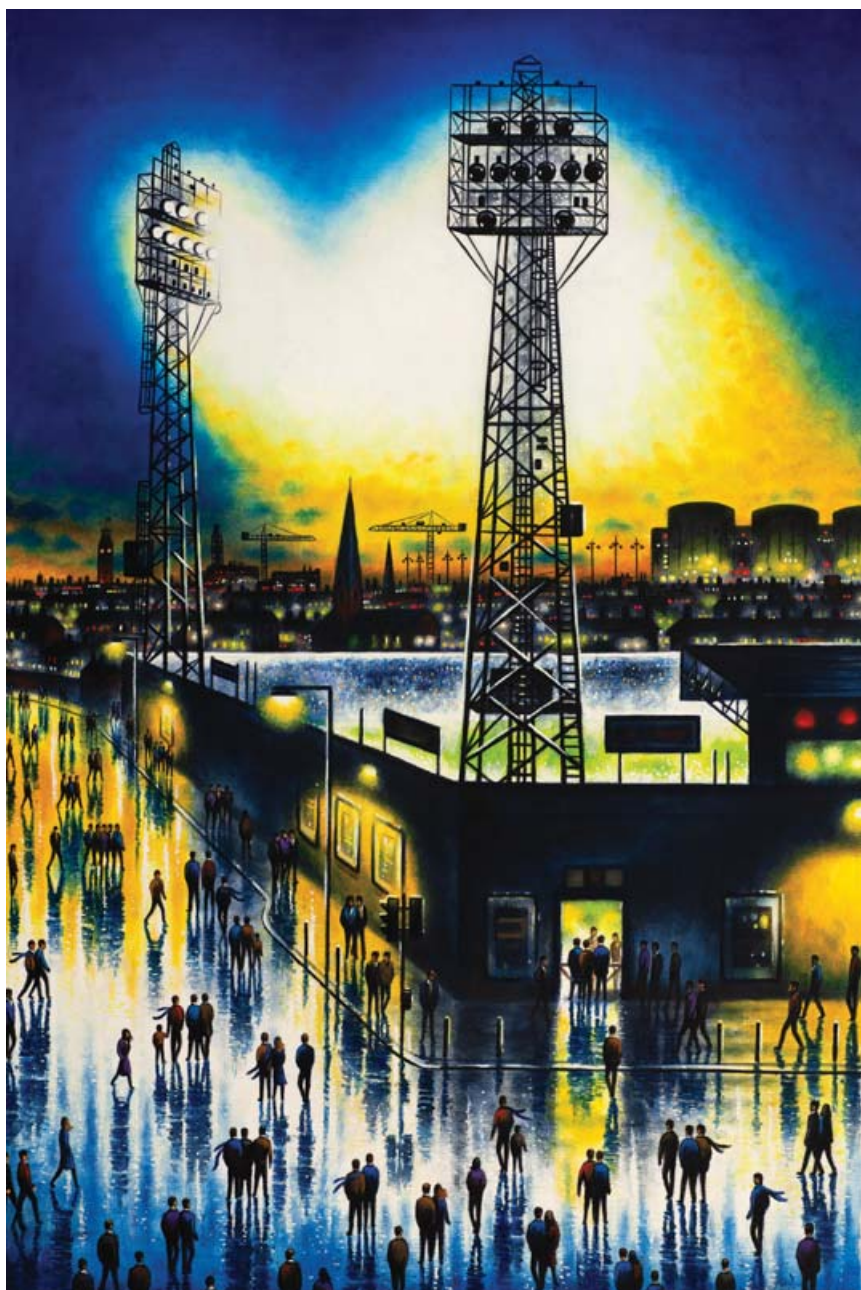
Kilburn State, 56 x 38cm, Oil on Canvas



Saltdean Lido, 38 x 56cm, Oil on Canvas



Roxy Cinema, 51 x 76cm, Oil on Canvas



Night Match, 76 x 51cm, Oil on Canvas



Bookshops, Charing Cross Road, London,
38 x 25cm, Etching

BFI Southbank,
38 x 25cm, Etching



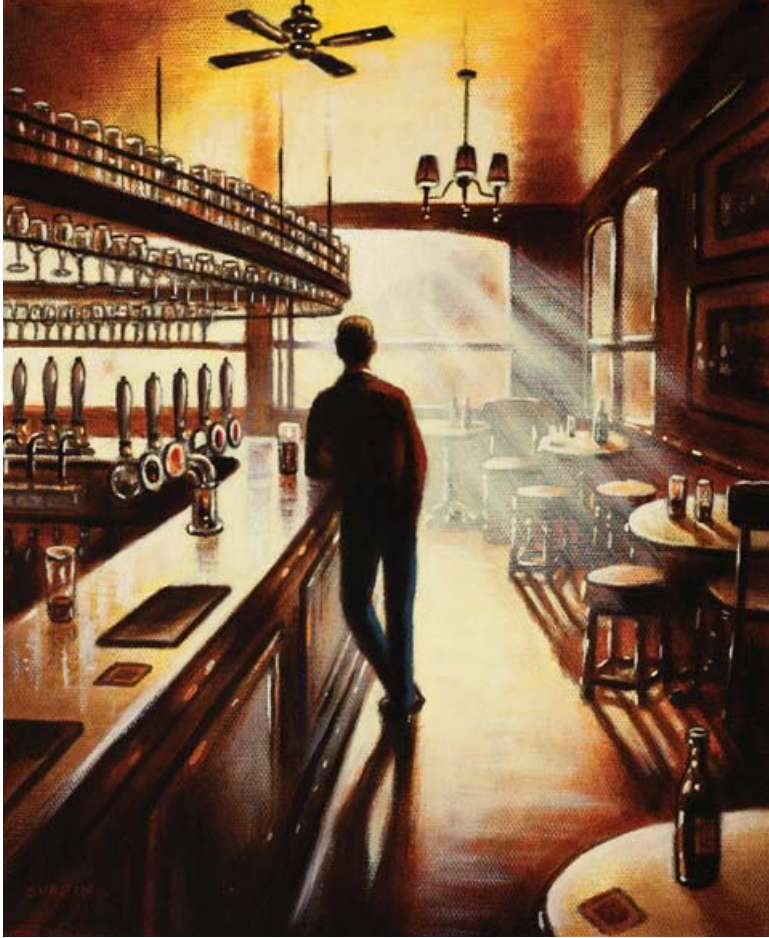


Kings Cross,
30 x 25cm, Etching

National Theatre London,
38 x 25cm, Etching



Back Cover: Bar Life 5, 30 x 25cm, Oil on Canvas



CATTO GALLERY

100 Heath Street • Hampstead • London NW3 1DP

Tel: +44 (0)20 7435 6660 • www.cattogallery.co.uk • art@cattogallery.co.uk

Opening times: 10am - 5.30pm Mon – Sat • 12 - 5pm Sunday • and by appointment

**You are welcome to attend the Private View with John Duffin
PLEASE NOTE: it's on WEDNESDAY 4th December 5.30-8.00pm**

Exhibition Dates: 4th – 22nd Dec 2024