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International Marnagement, Marketing & Media

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Iconic London bridge's 150th birthday tribute in new art exhibition

London's Cannon Street Bridge and Station celebrate their 150th anniversary in a major new exhibition by British landscape artist Dale Inglis.

Created over a 14-year period, **'Cannon Street Hotel [Paintings 2010-2024]'** is the artist's first exhibition in London for over a decade.

The paintings were completed 150 years after Cannon Street Station and Bridge were first built and mark 45 years since the artist opened his first studio in London, in Wapping, in 1979.

The exhibition runs from Thursday September 19th to Thursday October 31st 2024 at Inglis's Pullens Yards studio in Southwark.

'Cannon Street Hotel [Paintings 2010-2024]' comprises 25 original paintings, collages, screenprints and drawings, depicting the unique landscape where the River Thames passes through the historic heart of the City of London, stretching from Cannon Street on the north to Bankside on the south.

Inglis's paintings, many shown for the first time, present one location, in particular, which the artist has painted multiple times, in daytime, at night, and in all four seasons: London's iconic Cannon Street Bridge and Cannon Street Station, site of the former Cannon Street Hotel, from which the exhbition takes its name.

"The juxtaposition of the river, the bridges and the railway remind us that we are just passing through", observes Inglis.

The collection of paintings represents an ongoing fascination with bridges and riverscapes which Inglis shares with earlier artists like Claude Monet, James Whistler and Oscar Kokoschka, in a history of the Thames, in Art, stretching back to the 16th century.

Travelling thousands of times to London over many years, from his East Sussex home in Battle, often 6 days a week, Inglis says his fascination with the city's river and bridges, from the Hungerford Bridge to London Bridge, gradually came to focus on the Cannon Street railway bridge area simply through the frequency of his visits.

"The 360 degrees view of the river and surroundings from the platform and the train is breathtaking", he explains.

Working with a range of materials, from mixed media on canvas and panels, to oil on paper and spray paint on metal, Inglis's artistic practice furnishes each panel with an earlier life history which informs the preliminary stages of the work's development, but which, ultimately, may almost entirely be submerged.

"There is no *tabula rasa*", says Inglis, whose collage materials are "literally pieces of London", taken from London hoardings, corrugated iron fences and the London Underground.

The artist then paints and repaints versions of essentially the same image, alternating with layers of varnish, opaque paint, irregular dot patterns and text, created using decorator's paint, oil colour, varnish, aerosol and biro.

Inglis's distinctive use of colour has evolved over a number of years. His earlier work is based on the primary colours (red, yellow and blue), frequently unmixed, while the artist's later work is characterised by the much older palette of black, white, red and yellow.

These pigments are derived from clay, chalk and charcoal and “evolution has hard-wired these four colours into the human subconscious”, reveals Inglis.

Fundamental to painting since the beginning of time, this thread runs from Palaeolithic artists through the ancient Egyptians and Greeks, mediaeval painters, the masters of the Renaissance, Frans Hals, Rembrandt, Courbet, Anders Zorn (after whom the palette is sometimes named), Picasso, Marcel Duchamp, Alberto Burri and Anselm Kiefer.

“Red, yellow, black and white are part of a vast complex of related ideas that are part magic, part myth, part folklore and part science, with religious, mathematical, musical and cosmological connotations”, explains Inglis.

The artist says he tends to follow the mediaeval practice of using the colours unmixed, “to avoid sapping them of their purity and power.”

The exhibition coincides with the 100th anniversary of the publication of ‘The Waste Land’ by T.S. Eliot in 1922. The poem is a thread which runs through the exhibition and keen-eyed visitors may spot fragments and allusions to be found in many of Inglis’s paintings and titles.

Exhibition Catalogue: **https://tinyurl.com/yc6yuxw9**

‘**A Portrait of Dale Inglis [Film]: https://tinyurl.com/4z4p4yet**

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'**Cannon Street Hotel [Paintings 2010-2024**]' runs from September September 19th to October 31st 2024 at Studio 18a, Iliffe Yard, Pullens Yards, London SE17 3QA.

Pullens Yards Entrance: Crampton Street or Amelia Street
Buses: 35, 40, 45, 12, 68, 171, 176 **https://tinyurl.com/5y8cdf6z**
Tube: Kennington, Elephant & Castle [Northern Line]
Cycle hire station: Hampton Street **https://tinyurl.com/2s3u3ht4**

Private viewings, led by the artist, are by prior appointment, every Thursday and Friday [12 noon to 6.00pm].

For Further Enquiries, Viewing Appointment & Interviews:

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Note to Editors [encl]:

Artist's Statement [Dale Inglis]
'A Note On Colour' [Dale Inglis]
Cannon Street Bridge [History]
Cannon Street Station & Hotel [History]

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

The paintings represent an ongoing fascination with bridges and riverscapes.

Each panel has an earlier life history, which informs the preliminary stages in the development of the work, but ultimately may almost entirely be submerged. There is no tabula rasa.

The unfolding of the process then involves painting and repainting versions of essentially the same image, alternating with layers of varnish, opaque paint, irregular dot patterns and text, created using decorator's paint, oil colour, varnish, aerosol and biro.

This can take months or sometimes years as each layer is allowed to dry and cure. The top layer is opaque white.

The paintings are then subjected to a process of deconstruction, brought about by the use of paint remover, heat gun, blow torch, scraper and sandpaper. The layers of paint bubble, curl, shrivel and go up in smoke.

The work proceeds in stages, combining both intentional strategies and chance.

Sometimes the destruction is nearly total and the process of building begins again. The result is a rich surface bordering on the abstract, a palimpsest with tantalising fragments of meaning that nonetheless embody a truth about the subject matter, the painting process and the past. The painter has become an archaeologist.

Each layer is fashioned as if it were intended to be a finished piece in its own right. It also allows for experimentation and improvisation and the adoption of alternative painting personas.

No record is kept of successive intermediate layers.

Working on many paintings at the same time, as well as the protracted time scale involved, ensures that each uncovering is a voyage of discovery. It's also a bit like seeing your life passing in a flash. It can be exciting but nerve-wracking.

The inclusion of several panels in a single work can be seen as a parallel to cinema. It involves endlessly repeated journeys, coming and going, and endlessly repeated tides, offering glimpses of a shifting and elusive reality.

It is also intended that references to particular light or atmospheric conditions be overridden by a deeper truth based on elemental colour, a radiant and vibrant surface and simple abstract divisions.

Some of the titles are from T.S. Eliot's The Wasteland, in which Eliot returns again and again to the themes of cyclical history, referencing events and people which are the same and not the same.

In the poem he describes a form of historical and personal erosion through which distinct attributes are blurred and reduced in the passage of time, but which also accrete and accumulate over years or centuries to create a larger truth.

DALE INGLIS
September 2024

A NOTE ABOUT COLOUR

Among the ways that the work has evolved over a number of years is the use of colour. Earlier work is based on the primary colours (red, yellow and blue), frequently unmixed and applied more or less mechanically. Later work is based on the much older palette of black, white, red and yellow. The absence of blue implies the absence of green. These pigments are derived from clay, chalk and charcoal. Evolution has hard-wired these four colours into the human subconscious.

They have been fundamental to painting since the beginning of time. The thread runs from Palaeolithic artists through the ancient Egyptians and Greeks, mediaeval painters, the masters of the Renaissance, Frans Hals, Rembrandt, Courbet, Anders Zorn (after whom the palette is sometimes named), Picasso, Marcel Duchamp, Alberto Burri and Anselm Kiefer.

Carl Jung believed the four colours were part of the collective unconscious. His thinking was informed by his study of alchemy and its tendency to understand the world in terms of groups of four (quaternities).

The four colours remained fundamental and sacred from ancient times to at least the Renaissance and beyond. It wasn't the absence of the availability of blue and green, but the fact that red, yellow, black and white were part of a vast complex of related ideas that are part magic, part myth, part folklore and part science, with religious, mathematical, musical and cosmological connotations.

I tend to follow the mediaeval practice of using the colours unmixed to avoid sapping them of their purity and power.

DALE INGLIS
September 2024

CANNON STREET STATION & HOTEL

A Brief History

Map: https://tinyurl.com/776e3mav

Roman Origins

Some 2,000 years ago, in the days when the city was known as Londinium, the patch now occupied by the station was home to a large Roman building known as the '*Governor's Palace*'; an imposing administrative block, estimated to have been built circa AD80 to AD100.

This bureaucratic building is believed to have contained suites of offices and was accessible from the Thames via a wooden jetty. Some remains of this Roman site still exist deep beneath the railway terminal.

Candles and Cannons

By the medieval era, the road from which the station takes its name had become known as *Candlewick Street* on account of the numerous candle makers who lived and worked along the thoroughfare.

The present name, 'Cannon' is in fact a corruption of 'Candlewick' and has nothing at all to do with heavy weaponry.

European Enterprise

By the 10th century with the Roman office block long since crumbled, a major commercial base began to develop on the site.

Known as *The Steelyard* (derived from the Germaword, *Stalhof* meaning 'trading base'), this large depot was owned and operated by the *Hanseatic League*; a powerful confederation of guilds originating in Saxony.

Dominating trade across Northern Europe for several centuries, the Hanseatic League was a precursor to today's multi-national organisations. Their Cannon Street centre remained in use up until the 16th century.

Today, the Steelyard is commemorated in the names of two Thames footpaths; *Hanseatic Walk* and *Steelyard Passage*.

Running in a brick tunnel beneath Cannon Street station itself, Steelyard Passage is equipped with speakers which pipe out industrial sounds; atmospheric recreations of what one's ears would have rung to in the days when the area served cargo ships rather than trains.

The Railway Arrives

Built as the London terminal for the South Eastern Railway, Cannon Street station opened on the 1st September 1866.

Designed by John Hawkshaw, the station's first incarnation boasted towering walls and a soaring roof; 207 meters long and 32 metres high at its apex; "wider in a single span and longer than the roof of any other building in London" as a report from *The Observer* stated.

The same article also praised Cannon Street's signal box as being, "the greatest thing of its kind in the world. It extends from one side of the bridge to the other, and has a range of 67 levers."
All of this technology however couldn't prevent an embarrassing mishap which took place in 1926 – an unfortunate way to celebrate the 60th anniversarys of the station's opening

Shortly after leaving Cannon Street and crossing the Thames, a steam engine took a wrong turn on a viaduct. Led into a siding, high over Southwark's Park Street, the driver slammed on the brakes… but it was to no avail; his metal steed smashed through the buffers and straight into the roof of *Barclay and Perkins's* brewery.

The 60 tonne engine ended up dangling 8 feet above the brewery's vat room. Luckily, nobody was injured but the subsequent debris resulted in the tragic loss of over 200 barrels of beer.

A Grand Hotel for the City

In 1867, one year after the station opened the *Cannon Street Hotel* was added to the fledgling terminal. Designed by E.M Barry- son of Charles Barry, the main architect behind the Houses of Parliament- this new addition blessed the station with an extremely elegant façade.

In its day, the Cannon Street Hotel was a popular venue for meetings and conferences; many of which proved to be turbulent and overheated. It was here, in July 1920, that the British Communist Party was founded, no doubt encouraged by the revolution in Russia which had taken place three years previously.

In 1927, whilst attending a dinner at the hotel, politician David Lloyd George had his expensive overcoat stolen from his room. The thief was promptly collared in the main lobby but the former Prime Minister was so moved by the "pathetic story of distress related by the thief", that he insisted the misguided fellow be set free.

In the 1930s, the hotel bedrooms were converted into office suites. This new scheme did not last for very long however- the grand building was destroyed during the Blitz.

Another casualty of WWII was the station's celebrated glass roof.

When hostilities broke out in 1939, the wide expanse of panes had been carefully removed and taken to a factory for safekeeping… unfortunately, this supposedly safe haven was itself bombed, taking the stacks of glass with it.

Post-War

Scarred by bombs and with its roof lost, Cannon Street was in a sorry state following WWII.

The lack of glass meant the terminal was open to the elements, requiring shelters to be built on the platforms.

The station remained neglected until the 1960s when the terminal was redeveloped in a style typically modern of the time.

The main element of this scheme was a large office block, replacing the old frontage once occupied by the Cannon Street Hotel. The skeletal, glassless iron frame of the old roof was also dismantled.

The new offices were designed by John Poulson… whom it was later discovered won the contract thanks to backhanders and a shady friendship with Graham Tunbridge; a surveyor for British Rail.

Tried for corruption, the pair were found guilty, landing Poulson a seven year prison sentence.

“Poulson's building is remarked as being one of the most ugly of all station buildings in Britain, turning once a fine building into a hideous monstrosity. All that now remains of the original station architecture are the twin 120-ft red-brick towers at the country end and parts of the low flanking walls.”
[*Graces Guide*]

With financial markets booming, further office space was added in the 1980s and the station’s famous towers were treated to a full restoration. A bold scheme to add a helipad, first mooted in the early 1960s, was also revived.

However, with the promise of up to 70 helicopters buzzing in and out of Cannon Street every day, grave concerns were raised as to the potential noise levels and their effect on offices and services at nearby St Paul’s Cathedral.

In 1990, the issue was raised in Parliament, with one MP suggesting that "the proposal is an utter disgrace… uncivilised and wrong." Needless to say Cannon Street's heliport never came to fruition.

Cannon Street Today

In recent years, Cannon Street has once again undergone dramatic change.

Poulson's 1960s block was swept away in 2007 as part of a £360 million project to revamp the terminal. Designed by US developer, *Hines*, Cannon Street's latest look consists of 400,000 square ft. of gleaming office space accompanied by a further 17,000 ft. of retail space.

The once celebrated space above the platforms has also found a new lease of life… having been transformed into a stunning rooftop garden.

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