

PETER SPENS
Observatory



29th September - 4th October 2008

THE AIR GALLERY

32 DOVER STREET
LONDON W1S 4NE

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Observation Points

The Central London works in the Observatory show are based on four main viewing sites. The roof of One St Pauls Churchyard gave me an elevated view of the façade of the Cathedral, very up-close and personal. I painted just off the central axis of the building and at the level of the sculptured saints who appear to be declaiming just a street's width away. To the south of Wren's masterpiece runs a busy bus-laden road with a steady stream of traffic. There was one wonderful moment when I was working on the evening light picture when the stasis of the classical façade was broken by the main doors opening and the congregation and processional music came flooding out.

The busiest and most public place to work was a view of Parliament from the Jubilee pedestrian bridge which is attached to the Hungerford railway bridge. It was September 2006 and a huge number of people were pouring out of Waterloo towards the centre of town as the station was then still the terminal for Eurostar. Two police officers approached me and asked if I had a license to paint from the bridge and when I said I hadn't there was a long intake of breath and they rang through to headquarters,

"Caucasian male appears to be painting view of Parliament from Jubilee Bridge, over".

The CCTV camera at the end of the bridge twitched onto us and HQ replied,

"Why are you disturbing the gentleman? Are you wanting to buy the picture, over?"

It was good to know that the progress of the piece was being centrally monitored and the project protected!

In the autumn of 2006 I worked from Five Strand which gave a spectacular view west onto Trafalgar Square. This series occupied me from October until early December when the Christmas tree was put in place. I concentrated on the time just after sunset when there was still strong colour in the sky, balanced by the streetlights and illuminations surrounding Nelson's column which was in turn silhouetted against the sky or lit from the Square. It was a very wet period and this produced wonderfully liquid configurations and a dazzle of reflections in rainwater which combined to break down the solid elements of this landmark.

2007 was dominated by a series of works painted from Tate Modern, starting indoors from the top floor restaurant during the winter and working early in the morning before it opened. The summer months were spent painting a night series from two sixth floor balconies on either side of the huge power station chimney. The only other occupant of the east balcony was an installation of a recorded crow's shriek which was blasted out at regular intervals and became an abrupt and raucous companion to painting. I think I was a little too close to fully appreciate it!

The balconies afforded a triple view looking east to Southwark Bridge and the City, west to Blackfriars and north to St Pauls. This was perpendicular to the view from One St Pauls Churchyard where this series started.

These buildings have provided platforms from which to study specific periods in this city's life. Working from the same site over several months takes this process beyond the initial impact and identification of landmarks. The pictorial structure of a place becomes embedded through daily observation and the drama of incident is pronounced by this process.

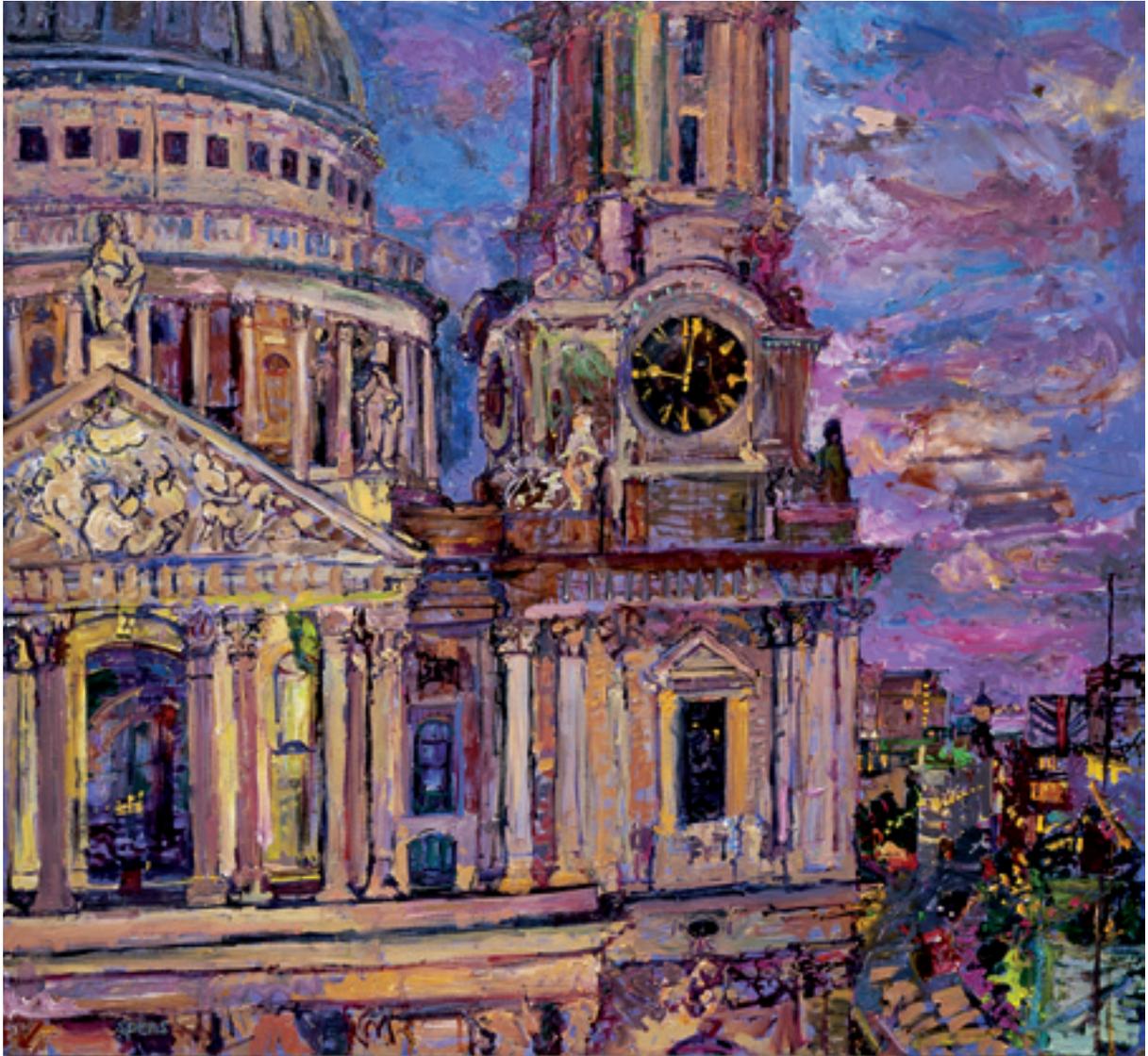
Peter Spens. London 2008.



For further information, critical essays and
to view previous shows, please visit
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3 | From the roof of One St Pauls Churchyard, Evening. 2006
Oil on board. 86.4 x 103.2 cms / 34 x 40⁵/₈ ins



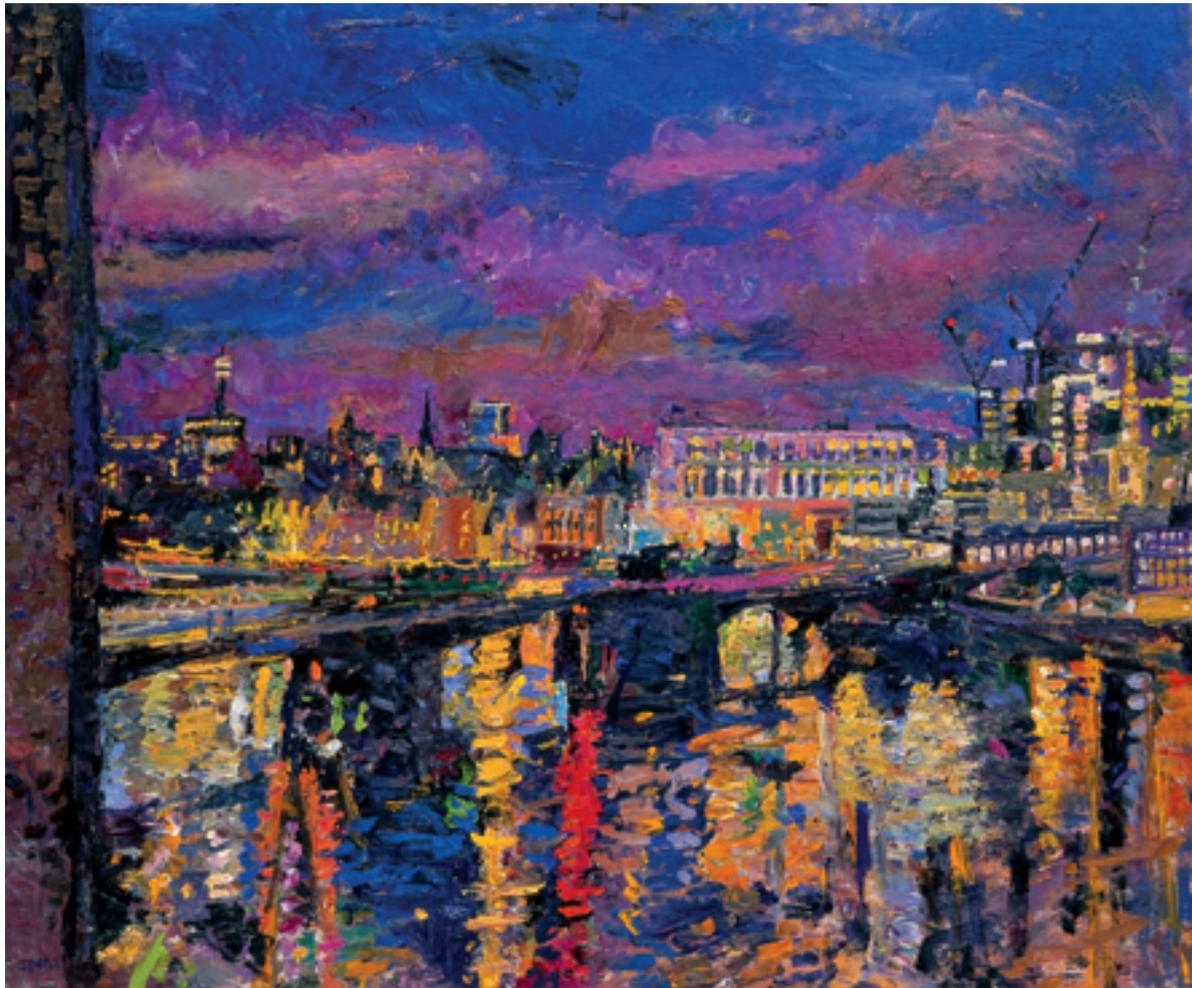
Night from the roof of One St Pauls Churchyard. 2006
Oil on board. 103.2 x 112 cms / 40⁵/₈ x 44¹/₈ ins



5 | St. Pauls from 7th Floor, Tate Modern. 2007
Oil on board. 119.4 x 74.1 cms / 47 x 29¹/₈ ins



Night, St. Pauls and the Millennium Bridge. 2007
Oil on board. 132.4 x 103 cms / 52¹/₈ x 40¹/₂ ins



7 | Night, Blackfriars Bridge from 6th Floor, Tate Modern. 2007
Oil on board. 98.3 x 118.5 cms / 38³/₄ x 46⁵/₈ ins



Night, Southwark Bridge and the City. 2007
Oil on board. 111.4 x 122.1 cms / 43⁷/₈ x 48¹/₈ ins





Night, The City from Tate Modern. 2007
Oil on board. 152.7 x 101.6 cms / 60¹/₈ x 40 ins





Parliament from Jubilee Bridge. 2006
Oil on board. 78.4 x 122.3 cms / 30⁷/₈ x 48¹/₈ ins





Autumn Highbury Place, evening light. 2007
Oil on board. 41.1 x 60.8 cms / 16¹/₈ x 23⁷/₈ ins





Autumn Highbury Place, grey sky. 2007
Oil on board. 73.6 x 104 cms / 29 x 41 ins





Winter, Highbury Place. 2008
Oil on board. 81.1 x 122.2 cms / 31⁷/₈ x 48¹/₈ ins



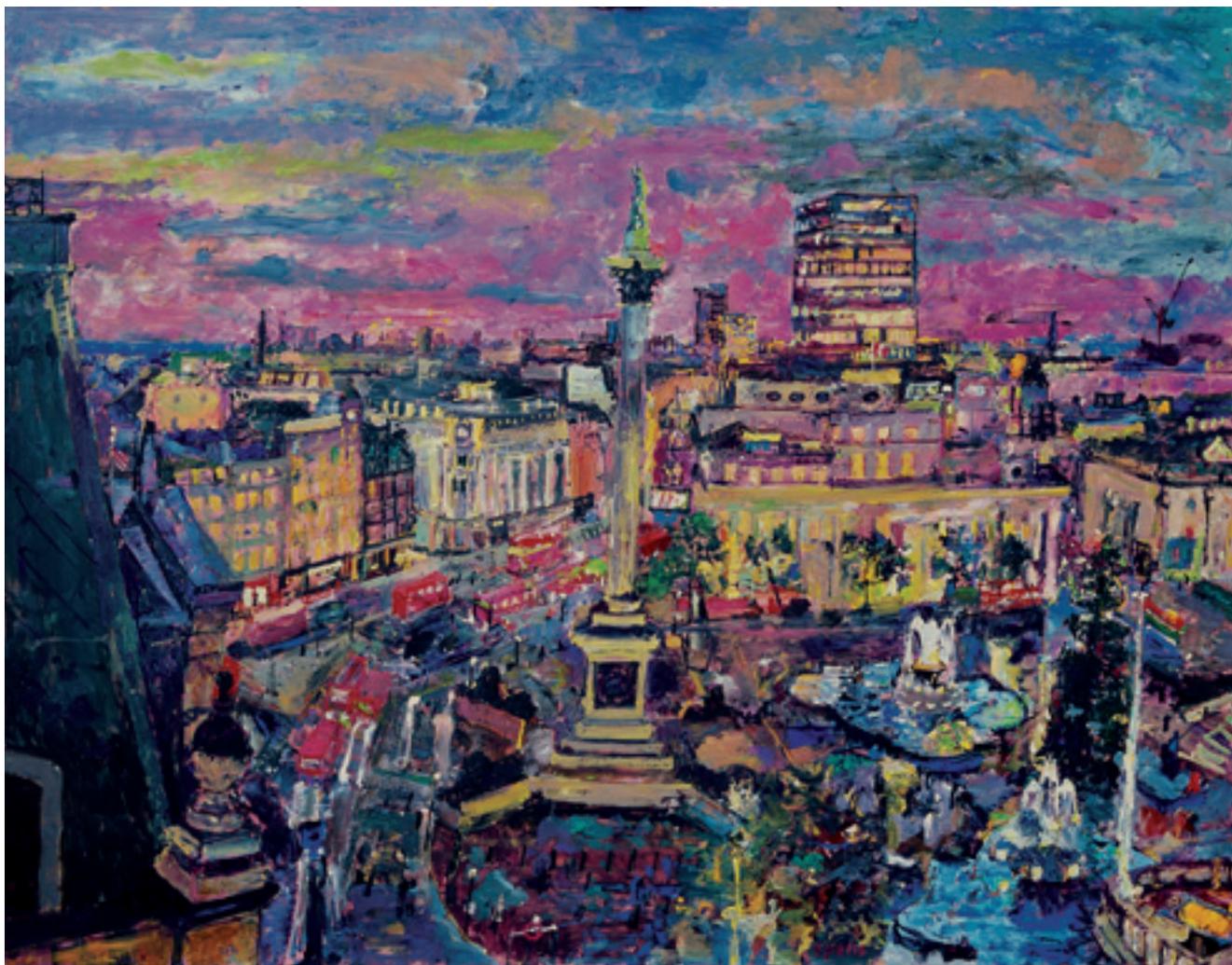






Night, Trafalgar Square from Five Strand. 2006
Oil on board. 132.5 x 88.4 cms / 52¹/₈ x 34³/₄ ins





Trafalgar Square from the roof of Five Strand. 2006
Oil on board. 106 x 132.4 cms / 41³/₄ x 52¹/₈ ins





Rain, Trafalgar Square from Five Strand. 2006
Oil on board. 122.2 x 80.9 cms / 48¹/₈ x 31⁷/₈ ins





Horse and rider, St Lucia. 2007
Oil on board. 27.1 x 33.8 cms / 10⁵/₈ x 13¹/₄ ins

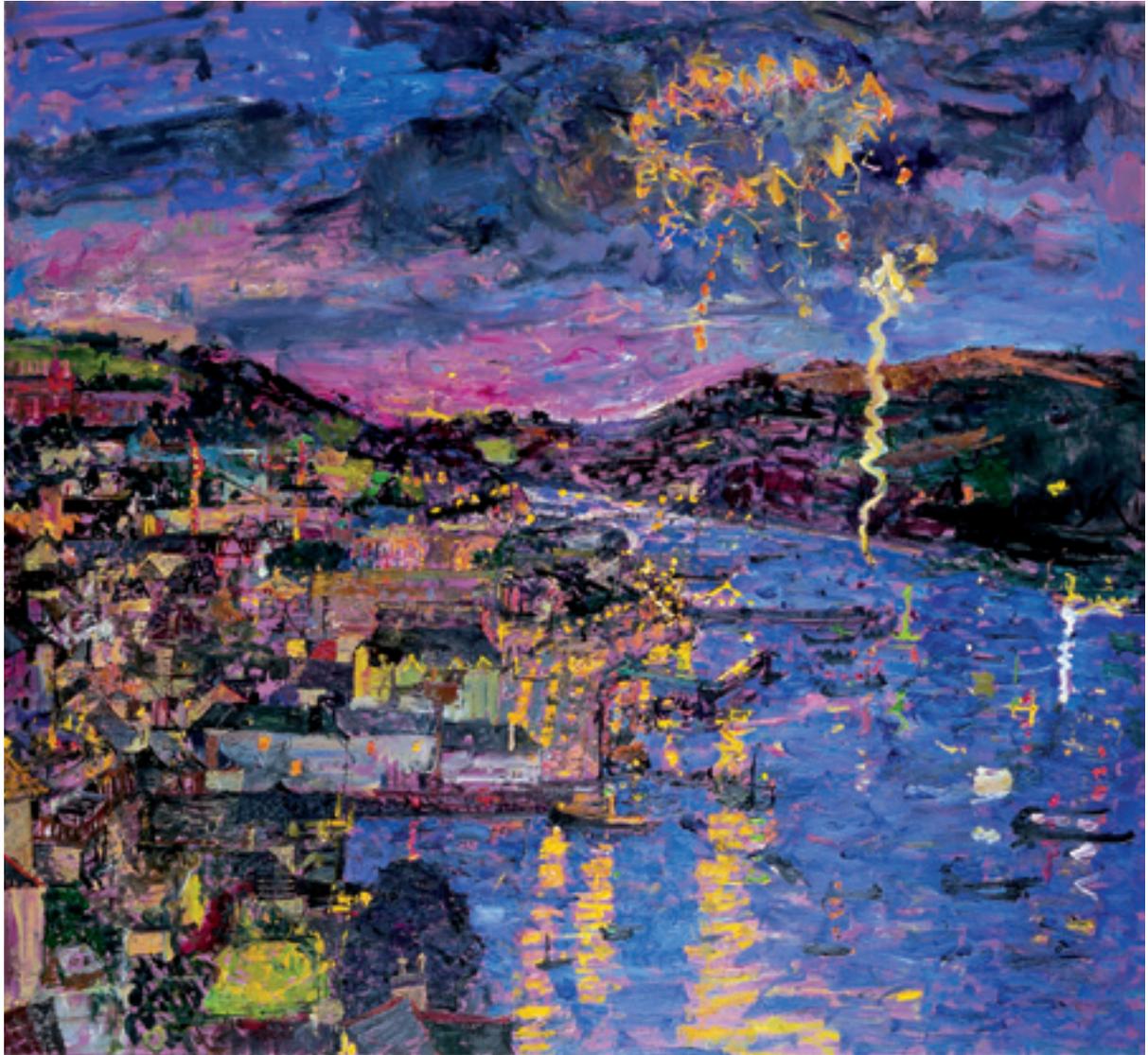












Fireworks, Dartmouth regatta, August. 2006
Oil on board. 95.0 x 102.9 cms / 37³/₈ x 40¹/₂ ins

