



Price's Candle Factory and Surroundings. 46 x 95cms

After painting the figure for many years I have recently turned my attention to the industrial and residential buildings of the inner city. My first visit to Manhattan was the source of the change of subject matter. I spent most of my time with my head pointed upwards and my neck cricked. I was completely fixated by the skyscrapers and tenements. What struck me most was the way old and new unified into a strange sort of order, an order similar to that found in nature. When I returned to London I began to look at the city in a different way.

Although it is not as visually spectacular as New York City, there are areas of London that interest me in the same way and have a continuing appeal. I tend to paint the same scenes over and over again but from different angles and at different times of day. The places I choose to work from are all within walking distance of my home in Chelsea and my studio in Westbourne Grove.

Battersea Power Station, Price's Candle Factory, Lots Road and Kensal Road are frequent subjects. I had passed these places

a thousand times and taken them for granted without ever really looking.

I found this view of Price's Candle Factory completely by accident while doing a shopping excursion to Sainsbury's. I walked along the towpath to find a very diverse selection of buildings within a quarter-mile stretch. The river was very calm and reflected everything vividly. I love to use water as a foreground in my paintings as it creates a strange perspective and also gives a peaceful atmosphere. It was a warm October day and I did several studies in acrylic on board. It was an incredibly enjoyable experience painting outdoors looking at all these strange angles and shapes.

Having made several trips to the same spot and gathered much information in the form of small paintings, I decided to make some large paintings of the area in my studio. I wanted to work in a variety of different sizes.

This was the final painting of four. I usually structure the composition to suit the shape of the canvas. I wanted to

include all the buildings which interested me and at the same time set them off against water and sky. I had to change and re-invent certain areas to suit the demands of colour and composition as well as creating the various contrasts I needed. I wanted to place modern council blocks against old functional buildings.

None of the buildings is decorative. They have all been purpose built and yet there is a strange beauty about the muted colours of the factories and warehouses framed by the river and clouds. Battersea Power Station appears in the background.

For me the power station is a most bizarre monument and is ever present on the horizon along the river. It features in many of my paintings and I never tire of looking at it. I find the strange angles and colours change with the light and it never looks the same on any given day.

People react differently to my cityscapes but always with some intensity. The either say something like "Why do you want to paint something so ugly?" or "God! I really love that!" There is never any middle ground, but better a strong reaction than a lukewarm one.

Sarah Stitt new paintings, 'City Scapes and Children at Play'. are at Long and Ryle. 4 John Islip Street. SW1 (0171-834 1434) from October 22 to November 28. Price range: £400 for gouaches up to £2,500 for oils.