

## **Christopher Farrell in Conversation**

**'Escape' Summer Exhibition 2017**

**Sarah Wiseman Gallery**

**15<sup>th</sup> July – 26<sup>th</sup> August**

**SWG: Can you tell us a little about your background and what has brought you to making art?**

**CF:** I was first encouraged to take up painting while studying my A level Art course. My tutor really helped me develop my portfolio for a foundation course in Art and Design at Maidenhead College of Art. While studying at Maidenhead, I discovered my passion for painting. I went on to study a BA (hons) Degree in Visual Art painting at De Montfort University. This was a fantastic three-year modular course, initially exploring many aspects of painting including abstract painting, landscape painting, conceptual drawing and then evolving in to a personal development self-written course. I was naturally inspired by the Leicestershire landscape, creating direct and indirect paintings based on Willesdon and Billesdon. In my second year, I won the David Murray Landscape painting bursary from the Royal Academy School of Art, and this encouraged me to apply for the Royal Academy School of Art Post Graduate Diploma. I was accepted in 1994.

While studying at the RA I had a dilemma. I was a landscape painter, in the centre of London. The first year was dedicated to life drawing and developing my personal vision. This is when I made the transition to cityscape painting and this subject has been with me ever since. During my study at the RA, I won the David Murray bursary again, as well as the Turner Gold medal for painting and the Young Artist of the Year Hunting Prize. I was also selected to work on a residency at the London Business School after my graduation. Throughout my art education, at every stage, there has been inspiring tutors. With their encouragement and critical support, they have helped me fulfil my painting career.

**SWG: What are your working processes; is there a typical day in the studio?**

**CF:** My current studio is based in Holborn Viaduct, near Saint Paul's Cathedral, which is perfect for my research and observations of London. Every studio day is different and challenging depending on what I am working on. I create large scale, commissioned paintings and digital paintings alongside my personal work. I often work on multiple pieces at the same time. The starting point is flexible, sometimes I just start painting and the image appears as [the painting] evolves. Mostly, I research a location from direct observation. For those hard to reach areas, I use Google Earth's 3D map of London and make drawings from the screen. These drawings provide the starting point of the painting. As the painting progresses they

take on their own autonomy and I refer less to source material and simply start inventing structures and spaces.

Using technology is also part of the painting process. At key moments, I will photograph the paintings to rework them in Photoshop by adding or taking away gestures digitally and reconstructing the space. I will then print out the reworked image and use that image as the basis for the next stage in the painting's development. My preferred painting medium is acrylic on linen, but I like to explore traditional supports and drawing techniques; notably, painting on copper and drawing with gold and silver on a gesso prepared support. I discovered these processes by looking around the National Gallery and British Museum where I discovered amazing paintings by Pieter Bruegel the Elder and the drawings of the Italian Renaissance.

**SWG: Which artists do you most identify with?**

While I look at contemporary art, I have always been drawn to Canaletto's paintings of London, trying to find the locations where he painted [such as] Somerset House, Greenwich, London Bridge and other locations, seeing if I can recreate that viewpoint. Seeing how skyline has evolved over the centuries is intriguing.

**SWG: How do people react to your work; Have there been any particularly memorable responses?**

Mostly positively...I hope. Over the past few years, I have been part of open studios and live painting events, which may be daunting for some, [but] I quite like sharing and demystifying the making process. For the Lynn Painter Stainer Prize 2017, I was invited to bring in a few copper paintings and start a painting demonstration in the Mall Galleries. The response was very good from the public, they were fascinated about the copper support and the way I combine traditional processes with technology and Photoshop.

**SWG: Our exhibition is entitled 'ESCAPE' - Where do you go to escape it all?**

I cycle most mornings; this clears the mind and get the endorphins going, setting me up for the day. I also like to play with my synths. My favourites are the Roland Boutique TB-03, MC-303 and Korg Volca Keys, creating a smooth string sound with a slight detune helps calm the soul.