

Although not permanently dependent on each other these paintings carry a closely related and consistent atmosphere. Instead of working from photographs Howard Rogers 'draws from looking', from 'training' his memory to pick detail from a store of observation. He uses this particular experience of place to assemble, compose and create. Rather than renditions of anything that really exists these images make up an equivalent; another place or 'reality'.

A top of a tower block picks up the sun and yet appears cold further down. Over time, observation can mix with knowledge to replace any initial freshness with an apparently solid version of reality. Light and dark, hot and cold, morning and evening when pictured can construct something weightier than impressionistic atmosphere.

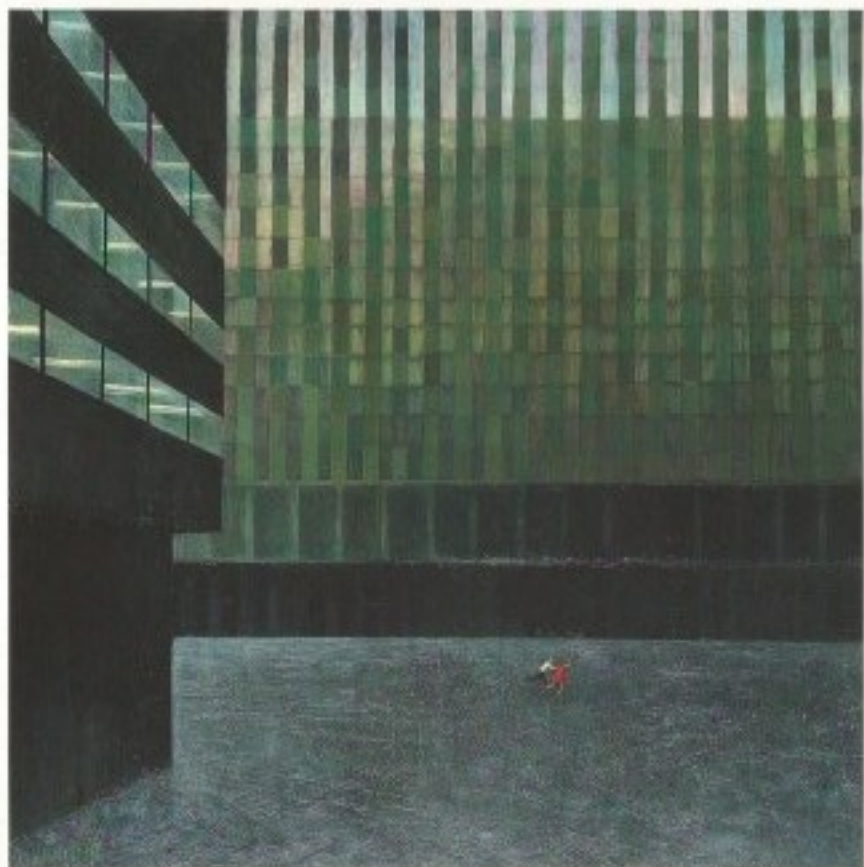
The effect is generally disquieting. By using the sort of heightened 'realism' present in British and French landscape painting just before the advent of Impressionism Howard Rogers achieves an intensely plausible pretence or 'possible' illusion. And the fact that nature itself can never be represented becomes part and parcel of the subject matter.

The paintings hover around the interaction between 'natural' landscape and 'unnatural' city. The figures that sometimes appear on the outside or edge of the situation act as narrators, or go-betweens; being neither here nor there. The buildings which are an amalgamation of newly built 'new' and older 'new' take on the quality of natural phenomena. Although attractive, and even marvelous from a distance, they retain an impenetrable and forbidding autonomy.

Such an apparently 'straight' presentation of imagery displays an unquestioning faith in the 'imaginative' possibilities of painting. Such construction or collage from the artist's personal memory and experience also displays a belief in a collective vision and understanding; that the 'views' can be seen and understood collectively. Such accumulated notions lead to generality. It is also important that the viewer is situated firmly on the outside looking in. The observation of the view, vista or scene starts from the same 'point of view'.

The situations are both 'real' and unreal'; the over familiar outline of the tower block sits surreally high in a blasted clifflike hinterland. Lights in an empty office building throw out a blue and watery, uncanny glow. An extraordinary and yet ordinary change takes place as a building is suddenly deserted on a summer evening, the focus having moved on to something elsewhere. The head lights of an early morning car pick up a small proportion of a massive unwieldy wall in *Canyon*. The scale of light to detail reminds more of a Victorian construction of nature. Neon and strip lights glow out through the windows. Two figures of strange and implausible scale flee across in front.

Although it would be simplistic to say that these pictures describe a contemporary 'nature' there is something about the way they are painted that carries current clues. While lumpy, grimy, romanticized cityscapes belong to an earlier time these paintings use sunrise, sunset, shadow and glow to illuminate artifice. The remnants of desolate estates in South East London combine with newly built but stylistically ancient private Dockland blocks to make up the only common vista possible. Howard Rogers is using the places he knows to make finely tuned metaphors that balance isolation with optimism.



HOWARD ROGERS