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May 2015 £4.20

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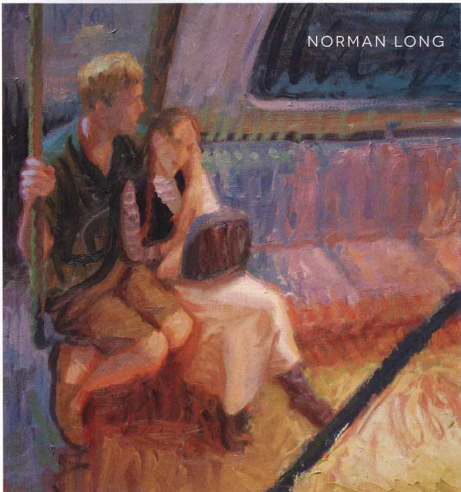
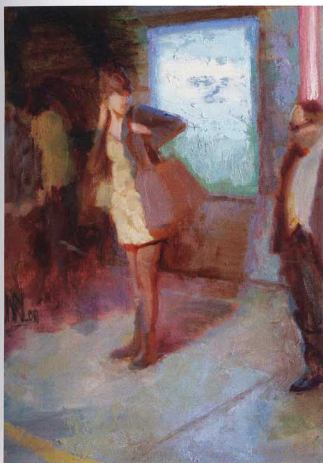
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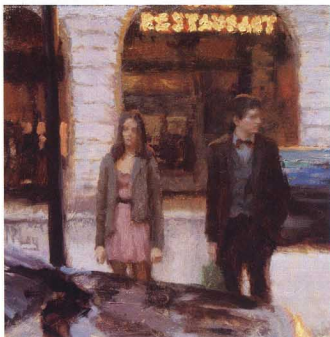


Long AWAITED

AS OUR ARTIST OF THE YEAR 2013 WINNER, **NORMAN LONG** WAS GIVEN THE CHANCE TO WORK TOWARDS A DEBUT LONDON SOLO EXHIBITION. A MONTH AWAY FROM THE PRIVATE VIEW, THE PRESTON PAINTER SHARES HIS THOUGHTS, FEARS AND METHODS WITH **STEVE PILL**



NORMAN LONG



ABOVE *Afterglow*, oil on board, 46x51cm

TOP LEFT *Working Girl*, oil on board, 35x51cm

LEFT *Ritz* Connection, oil on board, 30x30cm

OPPOSITE PAGE *Finding Themselves in Berkeley Square*, oil on board, 35x51cm

Like many people, Norman Long had fairly low expectations when he entered the Artists & Illustrators Artists of the Year 2013 competition. In the Preston-born painter's eyes, *The Bench*, his beautifully-observed triptych that would go on to win the competition, was just a "quite good" painting, no different from many of his other works. "I like to be objective when presenting my work," he admits. "I don't like to have a preference of one work over another, I prefer to just present them and then see whatever happens."

Nevertheless, when he brought his wife and young children along to collect his first prize at our annual exhibition opening last January, he still had little idea of the impact that *The Bench* would have on his career. "I could never have predicted everything that has come from winning the competition," he says with hindsight. "I've won a few prizes before and you get a lump sum of money and a little blip of publicity, but then you carry on with things back in the studio. This has been genuinely different. It has given me something to work towards and people are writing about my paintings... It's amazing."

As well as taking home £1,000 cash, Norman's prize also included gallery representation from The Osborne Studio Gallery. Over the last 15 months, that has seen the artist create a body of new work for a solo exhibition that will open at the Knightsbridge venue in April.

The gallery's director, Geoffrey Hughes, gave the 39-year-old artist free reign to tackle any subject of his choosing. "I liked the whole gamut of what Norman is doing, from the storytelling aspect of his work to the way that he paints, with the tonality and the soft colours," says

"I'VE WON PRIZES BEFORE BUT

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BEING ARTIST OF THE YEAR GAVE ME
SOMETHING TO WORK TOWARDS"

Geoffrey. "He's very good at doing what he's doing, so in a sense it's now up to us to gain interest in what he's doing."

For his part, Norman decided to further explore the human side of city life, turning his attentions from the northwest of England to the capital. "I'd had a show of figures in Manchester and I was looking for a new challenge, so London seemed like a natural development," he says of his monthly painting trips. "Arriving by train for >



**"LONDON SEEMED LIKE A GOOD CHALLENGE
THE AMOUNT OF VISUAL STIMULUS WAS**

overwhelming and constantly changing"

a day's painting in the city, I feel the buzz of humanity, as if I am plugged into the commuters' collective energy. Unlike the studio, the amount of visual stimulus was overwhelming and constantly changing."

Despite many of the 40 paintings in the exhibition having begun life in some of London's most popular locations, including Leicester Square and Piccadilly Square, Norman actually had other objectives in mind as he worked.

"I'm not really a topographical painter," he says. "Light, people and relationships are my primary concerns. Yet I know that if you, the viewer, can identify with a location in my painting, you will connect to it in a much stronger way. So I've tried to include just a suggestion, something to trigger that recognition. What I don't want is for you to identify the location and walk away. So if you're not quite sure, that's OK too. It keeps you in front of the painting for longer, and you may discover more."

While Norman is hugely grateful for the opportunity that his Artists of the Year win has afforded him, he is realistic about the difficulties involved in working towards a solo exhibition. There are times during the project when he questioned the direction his work was taking and found it hard to motivate himself on paintings that he had been refining for many months. Working in isolation, he developed some strategies for knuckling down and getting the hard graft done, some as simple as rewarding himself with a biscuit once he had put the next layer of colour down.

ABOVE *Another Day at the Circus*, oil on board, 137x51cm

"A journal is another great way of encouraging oneself and understanding what the blocks are at such times," he says. "At one point, somewhat overwhelmed with the thought of finishing all these paintings, I wrote 'Don't think of finishing paintings yet. Think of pushing them, roughly, to where they should be in their colour, composition and drawing. You must get the gesture and expression of the figures, even if that has to come on top of colour ideas worked out. Ideally, you can do it all at once, imperfectly, quickly, bravely, uncaring.'"

Judging by the portfolio of work he has produced for the exhibition, such positive thinking has clearly paid off. The artist has taken up the mantle of his painterly heroes such as Pissarro and Degas, while maintaining his own vision and finding a sensitive and contemporary take on his chosen subject. "Even in this enviable situation, I felt the need to prevent the commercial concerns from having too great an influence on what I was doing in the studio. At times I had to reign in my thoughts, remember that the paintings will be around much longer than the exhibition and redirect my attention to strengthening the feeling in the work rather than aiming for saleability."

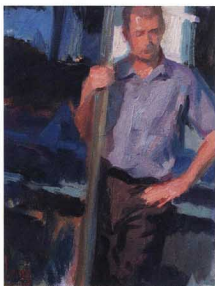
Given the opportunity to prove himself worthy of a solo exhibition, Norman has excelled and looks ready to take the next step in this most promising of careers. Norman's exhibition runs from 21 April to 8 May at the Osborne Studio Gallery, London SW1. www.normanlongartist.com



BELOW *Night Rider*,
oil on board,
30x35cm

BELOW LEFT
Charmed, oil on
board, 51x121cm

BOTTOM RIGHT
Quicker to Walk, oil
on board, 51x35cm



SELL YOUR ART

NORMAN'S GALLERIST
GEOFFREY HUGHES
ON HOW TO APPROACH
GALLERIES AND
MAXIMISE SALES

DO YOUR RESEARCH

"Make as much effort to research a gallery before you approach them. If an artist has sent a round-robin email, I won't be inclined to look at their paintings."

DON'T SELL OUT

"I tend not to be dogmatic; I don't want to change people or say we want this or that. A gallery owner has got to try and get the best out of what an artist already has."

DO THINK ABOUT TITLES

"People want to associate with a painting so only mention popular destinations. Otherwise try to come up with a clever title that adds to the story."

DON'T USE LAVISH FRAMES

"A bad frame can prevent a client buying a painting they love. Avoid over-the-top frames; a good, smart frame that suits the picture is best."

DO VARY YOUR OUTPUT

"Our top artist is Hubert de Watrigant and he paints in a lot of different mediums, shapes and sizes. It gives more variety and helps us find different buyers."

