

# London calling

THE CONSUMMATE PAINTER OF LONDON LIFE, LEON KOSSOFF, CONTINUES TO MAKE ART THAT BRIMS WITH ENERGY, AS HIS NEW SHOW REVEALS. BY WILLIAM FEAVER

Leon Kossoff talks about 'the pressure of the accumulation of memories'. His subjects tend to wilt or bulge under the urgency of his application. Continuity of a sort – seamless painterly continuity and forceful drawing continuity – prevails. His subjects, whether busy tube station, teeming swimming pool, looming Christ Church Spitalfields, or seated figure unadorned, still engage him, as they have done for well over 60 years.

Throughout his life Kossoff's setting has been London. His London stretches north of the river, from the East End to Kilburn and beyond; topically it dates back to the immediate post-war period when excavations in Oxford Street and around St Paul's made way for towering office

blocks; emotionally it contains everything that occurs to him as he picks and chooses from the welter of possibilities of those situations that, to him, are charged with energetic possibilities. There's the clamour of the lido, the mad dash of the commuter train rushing past the back fence of his garden; streets fall in with his needs, his intimately observed people fill in for him, occupying pavement or booking hall.

Far too often, Kossoff has been told that he paints thickly and draws heavily, but the truth is he paints in depth and draws sensationally. This applies as much to people indoors as it does to a suburban cherry tree propped up in its old age but still sprouting fresh shoots. Recently he has returned to his childhood settings, including Arnold Circus in Shoreditch (right), where fine red-brick apartment blocks dating from the 1890s overlook the little oasis of a bandstand on a mound encircled by trees. In his hands the place whizzes into celebratory mode. The trees incline, the buildings glow and people enter from all sides: Kossoff's Londoners, so appreciative of where they are that they melt into the moment.



*Arnold Circus*, c.2008-10, by Leon Kossoff

**Leon Kossoff** Annelly Juda Fine Art, London, 020 7629 7578, until 6 July