

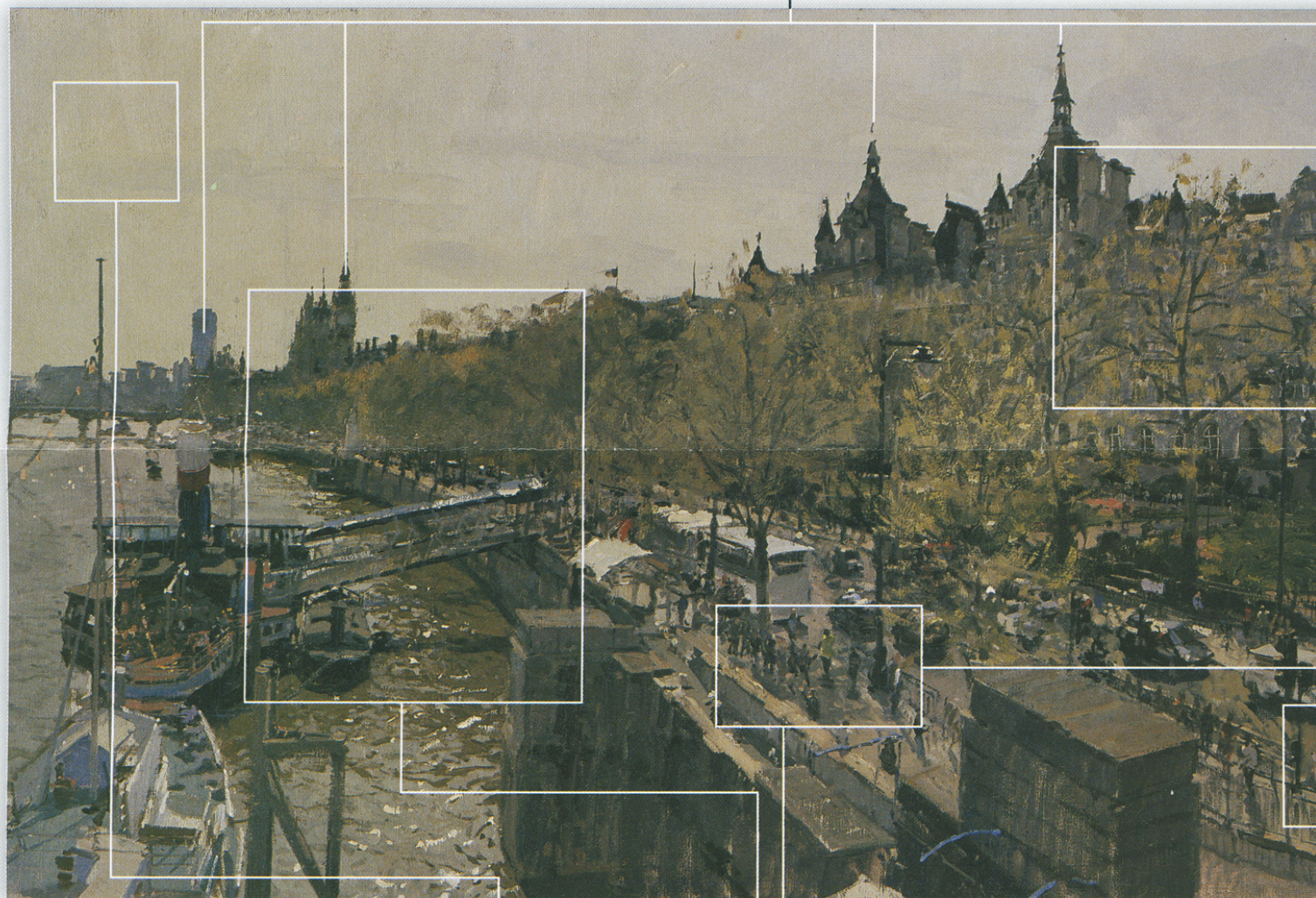
# Brown's World

**Pete Brown** is a foremost painter, who made a name for himself in Bath painting outdoors in all weathers. Here he is, with an anatomy of two of his works.

## A. Verticals and mapping out

My initial problem was mapping out the composition on such a large canvas. When working on a big canvas you have to move your body to see your subject. That constant flicking you can usually do with your eyes between subjects, to compare shapes, is not possible. To make sense of what goes where and judge the scaling, I lowered the canvas, tilting it back

to look over the top and 'drop' positions of key vertical landmarks onto canvas. I tried to position myself so the landmarks appeared in roughly the position I wanted them on the canvas. It's difficult to stick to standard perspective rules on a big canvas. Here, my plane of vision changes when looking right down Northumberland Avenue and left to Westminster, so a mixture of techniques works.



## From Jubilee Bridge

oil on canvas, 61x122cm.

"I love this spot. The view west has everything you could possibly want to paint: water, great architecture, traffic, people and plenty of action. I painted it in spring/early summer."

### Initial problems:

On the recce I decided I wanted as much as possible in the composition, a good chunk of the boats on the left and a view up Northumberland Avenue on the far right. I also wanted to see the top of

Whitehall Court, and at the same time get as much road and water in the foreground, to keep that feeling of looking down onto the action.

### B. Sky

I am ashamed to say I hate the idea of painting to a formula, but as with most paintings I start with the sky, using a certain amount of Alkyd titanium white glaze medium in the mix to decrease the drying time. The sky sets the tone for the painting.

### C. More detailed drawing

After blocking in the sky, I got involved in the width and height of the parliament buildings, distances and angles between the second boat and parliament with the stone blocks on the embankment. I used this to measure more accurately.

### E. People and action

I want my paintings to move, which is one of the reasons I'm not interested in using photography. My figures would confuse an osteopath, and it would be great if everyone was a perfect life study in itself. But what I am aiming for is bustle and fizz. I stare at people moving and sometimes a pose sticks in my head.

i) In this area the grouping is bizarre and fairly unnatural. Over various sittings, as I saw figures or poses I liked I noted them down in this spot, and they stayed there.  
ii) These three figures got here

because of an ear bashing I received from a group of young lads, who were indignant that there was no one like them in the painting. I didn't let them know, but I thought they made a fair point. As they walked away I noted them in my head and put them in a prominent position at the crossing.  
iii) I love groups of tourists or school kids. It's quite a challenge to paint them. As a consequence I tried to forget they were a group of individuals and instead tried to look at the shape of the mass.



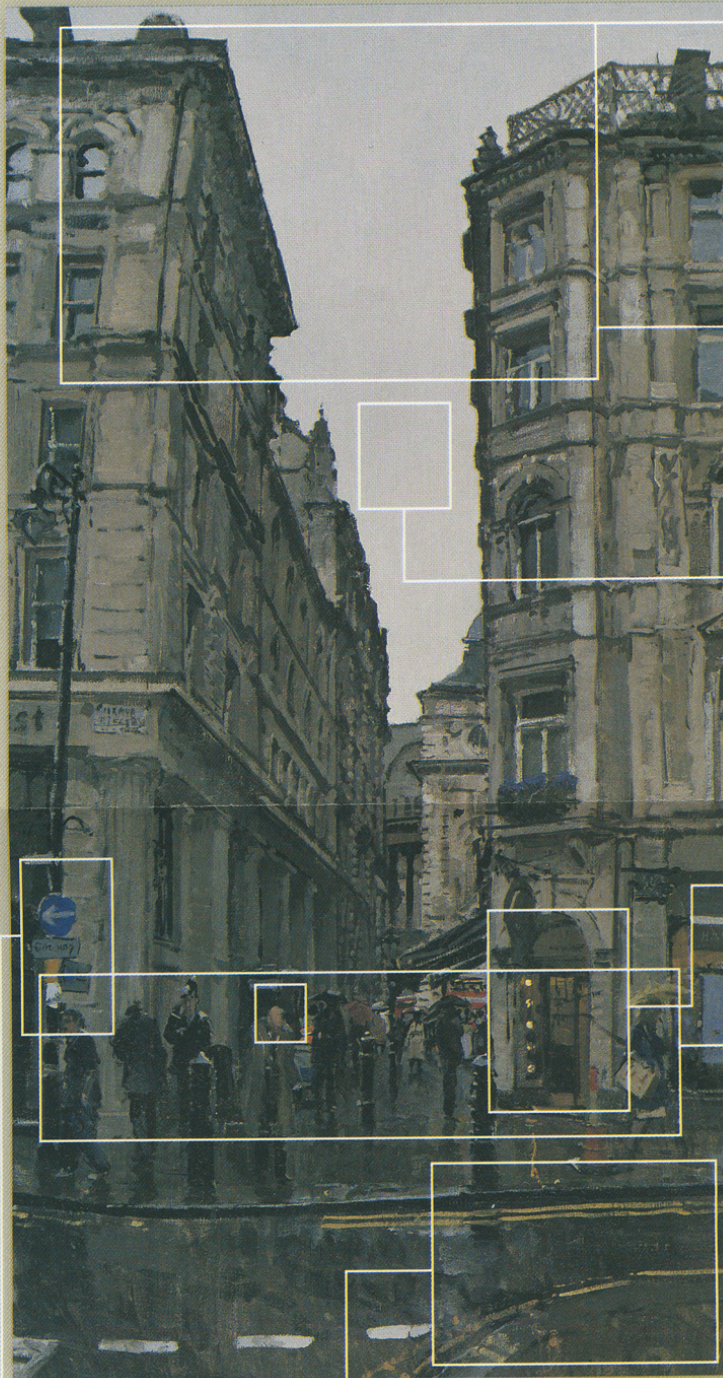
**D. Whitehall Court and trees**

It was important to get the difference in tone and colour between the buildings and trees, with the cool of the stone back dropping the new green leaf of the trees. The buildings started a good deal lighter, but as the sun moved round, the buildings darkened and the back-lit leaves shone. I went with it, adding purple and grey to the buildings while trying not to go over the top in acidifying the leaves to lemon yellow, which I have done in the past.

**Eagle Place, Rain**

oil on canvas, 102x51 cm.

"This view caught my eye one drizzly day in May or June."

**C. Converging buildings**

What really intrigued me about this place was the height of the buildings and their close proximity, as well as the heaviness of the stone. Again, I abandoned perspective lines early on, feeling more comfortable bending in the top of the building on the left. Initially, I used a T-square to prevent me from going wobbly.

**D. Reaching to paint the tops**

I tried to keep the eye level in the painting in line with my own, as much as I could. To do this I was looking up to the top of the painting in the same way as I was looking up to the tops of the buildings in real life. I really had to stretch to reach these bits.

**E. Sky**

Unlike the other painting, the sky was the last element to be resolved. I was not happy with the original colour and tone of it. I also wanted a good hard line between sky and building, so I fixed this in the studio using Madder Brown in the mix, which gives it a pink tinge and takes it away from the umber green of the buildings.

**F. Lights**

I do like a glimmer of hope in my miserable paintings, and the lights in the shop made me feel that there was somewhere warm and dry.

**G. Figures**

The painting was completed over three or four sittings, and the figures appeared over that time, some while it was raining and some not. The man second from the left was on a mobile phone. You would think they would stand still, but people on mobile phones love walking around in circles!

**Artist's profile**

Peter Brown made a name for himself in Bath by painting outdoors in all weathers and selling his works fresh from his easel. Although he now enjoys a national reputation, it is to his credit that he has remained true to his roots.

Peter has won numerous awards including last year's Hunting Art Prize Drawing Award and has had a string of successful one-man exhibitions in London and Bath. He was chosen to be the first Artist in Residence for the Savoy Hotel group where he followed in the footsteps of Monet and Whistler painting the Thames from the hotel on the Strand.

**A. Street furnishings**

Passers by often comment that I include the street furniture and road markings (some like it, some don't.) For me, these are just as important as buildings or figures. In fact, it's not just a question of putting them in, it would be more of an effort to leave them out. They provide colour and light relief from the dour stone and tarmac. I'm a sucker for fluorescent jackets, so road sweepers are usually featured.

**B. Wet ground**

I started it in the rain and quickly roughed out the drawing; the paint thinned with glaze medium I started work on the ground, in an attempt to capture the greasy wet road and pavements. The oil repels the rain for a bit. You can only work for a certain amount of time before the paint will no longer stick to the canvas, or even be picked up from the palette.

Both paintings can be seen in Peter's next one-man exhibition at Messums from 7-24 March 2007. *From Jubilee Bridge* was also featured in the Lynn Painter Stainers Prize exhibition from 22 November-2 December 2006.

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