



The Artist

On your travels about the Pall Mall clubhouse this summer, you may have noticed that artists are busy at work around the building. A group from the Federation of British Artists, based at London's Mall Galleries, have been capturing scenes of 89 Pall Mall in celebration of its centennial year, and these works will be shown in the Hanging Room in November. Painters such as Tom Coates, Ken Howard and Susan Ryder have been inspired by the plush Pall Mall interiors.

While these artists have been getting to grips with the interior, for one of their number, the outside of the building has been of interest. Peter Brown, or 'Pete the Street' as he is known, is one of Britain's foremost landscape and street artists. 'When I heard about it [the exhibition] and was asked if I'd like to take part I jumped at it. I did the two commissions for the Mall Room which I thoroughly enjoyed and to show alongside all these great painters is always good,' he says. 'I knew I did not want to do an interior. I love working outdoors particularly at this time of year and I wanted to portray the grand facade.'

Born in Reading in 1967, Brown studied first at Bath in 1986 and then at Manchester Polytechnic from 1987-1990. He returned to Bath in 1993 where he still lives with his wife and five children. He works across several media including pastel, oil and charcoal and can be found painting in all kinds of weather.

While Brown has painted many cities around the country, he has often painted London and loves it all. 'The West End has amazing architecture, I love the city and the river but I really enjoy going out to the suburbs.' Straight after the recent London riots, he travelled to Tottenham High Road to paint a burnt out building. 'I love London's spirit - there is a wonderful sense of community. I'll never forget 30 days after the 7/7 bombings, I was painting near Trafalgar Square when all the traffic stopped, engines off, and everyone stepped onto the roads for a two minute silence.' As well as scenes of devastation, Brown is currently painting Old Bond Street and Harrods. He has also just painted Primrose Hill; 'I love its fantastic views and bizarre behaviour from the fruitcakes who see it as a gym!'



The painting of Pall Mall

Brown explains that choosing the position from which to paint the clubhouse was easy; 'Pall Mall is looking fantastic with the two way traffic and new paving. It was a no brainer. I had a very quick scout round but settled on this view quickly with the club standing large and proud in this fabulous street.' He chose to paint the building at dusk, when the setting sun catches the facade. Although most of the street is in shade, Brown wanted to capture the cool light of the end of the day within the shadows that bounce around the pavements and buildings. The painting took three sittings to complete; 'The first sitting was dusk - low even light - but the second two were sunlit summer evenings just before dusk which was a treat. Working on the result of my first go - mainly tones of grey - I put in the sunlight on the buildings and glancing the street. Eventually as I worked up to 7.00pm the sky was by far the lightest and I put that down last of all in the second bash. The third sitting I concentrated on correcting detail, adding any missing bits and adjusting wobbles and errors.'

Working out on the street, Brown is privy to the hustle and bustle of life in the big city.

He says that he has had a lovely reaction to the painting from passers by. 'A lady asked if I'd like a beer - when I told her I did not have time, she put the can of Stella back in her bag.'

Indeed, it is lucky for the club that the painting is still available to be shown in the Hanging Room. 'One man who saw it while passing in a taxi tried to buy it then and there but I put him off as it was for the show.'

*Centenary show, Hanging Room, Pall Mall, Private View Nov 21 6.30-8.30pm
please email: hangingroom@royalautomobileclub.co.uk*

The Mall Galleries comprises eight leading art societies, the oldest of which dates back to 1823, including the Royal Society of Painters in Water Colours and the Royal Society of British Artists. Mall Galleries, The Mall (near Trafalgar Square), London, SW1 is open daily, 10am - 5pm during exhibitions (unless otherwise stated), including Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays.

Peter Brown's work can be purchased through his agent, Messum's, 8 Cork Street, London, W1S 3LJ (Tel: +4420 7437 5545)