

be running the place. He's full of passion for Shakespeare as a contemporary voice, and his anarchic and funny book *Will and Me: How Shakespeare Took Over My Life* pays Shakespeare the compliment of treating him as a very human writer full of flaws. I particularly love the idea that every play contains patches of lousy writing where Shakespeare had clearly started work that morning with a hangover. It's this similarly irreverent, tradition-free approach to performance that has kept the theatre from becoming a mock-Tudor outpost of Madame Tussauds, however Elizabethan the costumes.

As for the accusation that it's packed full of tourists, Dromgoole says when they did a survey it was about 20 per cent of the gate. 'Anyway, who cares? They didn't build the first Globe to keep the tourists out. In fact the only information we have about the original theatre is a sketch and a diary entry by a Swiss and a German — both tourists in Shakespeare's cosmopolitan London.'

It would be wonderful one year to have a season of plays not by Shakespeare at the Globe. Dromgoole agrees but points out that they would lose about £3 million and around 30 jobs if they did. When the smaller indoor theatre next to the Globe — currently a shell — raises the required £3 million, there'll be a place for the other great dramatists of the period. Top of his wish list are Marston's *The Malcontent* and Dekker and Middleton's *The Roaring Girl*.

Dromgoole's contract runs to 2011, although he hopes to be able to stay for the Olympics. But he's doing the job for the best of reasons. It's fun. Just as thunder rumbles ominously for the *matinée* of *King Lear*, he sniffs the wind for rain and says, 'There's very little as pleasurable as playing Shakespeare in a beautiful theatre to appreciative audiences beside a river during the summer. There's not a lot wrong with that.'

Exhibitions

Dancing lines

Andrew Lambirth

Leon Kossoff: Unique Prints

Art Space Gallery, 84 St Peter's Street, London N1, until 21 June

Paintings of Stockport by Helen Clapcott

Stockport Art Gallery, until 28 June

Leon Kossoff (born 1926) is best known as a painter of people and buildings, rendered in thickly meshed paint surprisingly full of light. He trained at the Borough Polytechnic under the visionary David Bomberg, from whom he learnt about the conveyance of insight and emotion through the stuff of paint. It's a



'From Poussin: The Destruction and Sack of the Temple of Jerusalem', 1999, by Leon Kossoff

form of expressionism by which the world is apprehended through the senses and given back in paint. The subject and the artist's experience of it become one, and are then gathered into the structure of the paint to exert their effect on the sensory system of the viewer. Kossoff has built upon this powerful foundation to make art of remarkable intensity and truth. His subjects have ranged from portraits to swimming pools to the exterior of Christchurch, Spitalfields. He has also maintained an immensely fruitful dialogue with the great tradition of Western art, making paintings, drawings and prints in response to Old Masters, mostly those in the National Gallery.

The Tate mounted a major exhibition of Kossoff's paintings in 1996, but his drawings and prints are a lesser-known quantity. A number were included in the successful small show *Drawing from Painting* at the National Gallery last year, but otherwise the works on paper are rarely seen. The current exhibition of Kossoff's etchings and dry points at Art Space Gallery is thus the first solo show of the artist's unique prints. They're called 'unique prints' because they're not editioned in the usual way: each one is subtly different. The same plate is used, but each print has been adjusted from its predecessor, principally by wiping the plate for varying strengths and absences of ink, which alters the intensities of line and tone. They are printed in very small numbers — perhaps three or four versions of each image — and are priced accordingly. The exhibition at Art Space is a terrific demonstration of Kossoff's abilities as a draughtsman. There are only 20 prints on show but the work sings.

As you enter the gallery at ground level, there is a single Kossoff painting to be seen: 'Bacchanal before a Term of Pan by Poussin' (1997–8). It sets the scene for the exhibition, which is a series of printed interpretations of paintings from the National Gallery, which Kossoff has been visiting regularly since he was ten years old. It also shows how reliant Kossoff's painting style is upon drawing. Downstairs the exhibition proper begins with a marvellous drypoint and aquatint 'From Rembrandt: Ecce Homo' (1999) and then leads into a powerfully structured group of prints on the end wall, two drypoints from Veronese's 'Adoration of the Kings' flanking 'From Rembrandt: Lamentation Over the Dead Christ — No. 2'. Compare the two Veronese versions for the differences that inking can offer: one is almost sepia, and much gentler than the bristly black lines of the other. Another sepia image is 'From Rubens: The Judgment of Paris', the luscious nudes summoned up by speedy and more curved marks, caressive without being sentimental. I love the openness of the soft ground etching and aquatint that comes next: 'From Constable: Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows' — the landscape seems almost to breathe in the soft gallery light.

This show has been brilliantly installed, and the next piece of hanging is particularly inspired. 'From Degas: Combing the Hair (La Coiffure)' — the earliest image here, dating from 1988 — is juxtaposed with 'From Velázquez: Christ after the Flagellation, Contemplated by the Christian Soul' (1993). Various rhythms and echoes are set up between these two drypoints, most especially in the way the drawing of the woman's hair,

combed out at full length, echoes Christ's arms, stretched from the pillar to which they're manacled. The exhibition is full of such felicities, and ends on a wonderfully resonant note in the double-height space at the other end of the gallery. Here are hung 'From Poussin: A Bacchanalian Revel before a Term — For Euan' (a drypoint and etching done in memory of Kossoff's friend Euan Uglow), 'From Constable: Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows' and 'From Poussin: Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake'. On the end wall is 'From Poussin: The Destruction and Sack of the Temple of Jerusalem', a lovely wild image like the sea breaking against a bulwark. What a range of emotion. Kossoff has gone on record as saying, 'I think of everything I do as a form of drawing', and this exhibition is a triumphant reassertion of his belief.

Let me admit at once that I haven't seen the exhibition of Helen Clapcott's paintings of Stockport, but I've admired her work for years. I also live with one of her pictures and it never fails to bring me pleasure when I pause in front of it to refresh the eye. It may seem an odd thing to suggest, that a painting of urban dereliction can lift the spirits, but any artist worth his salt will be able to locate the beautiful in the mundane or even dreary. It is for art's ability to transform — in all its manifestations, whether in the thickly built surfaces of a Kossoff painting or the dancing lines of one of his prints, or in the

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