

TIMOTHY HYMAN

THE MAN INSCRIBED WITH LONDON

AUSTIN/DESMOND FINE ART

1. **The Man Incribed with London**, 2009
Oil on wood 183 x 101 cm





TIMOTHY HYMAN
AN ESSAY BY
TESS JARAY

Many things about Timothy Hyman's paintings are immediately clear: his passion for London – his City, his Place – and his detailed painterly investigation of his own place in that city, where he fits in and in what way he belongs, and his absorption in the question of how cities have been painted in the past. From his clear and scholarly writings – he writes like a painter, not an historian, which is why his work means so much to so many artists – we know of his love of Indian Art, of Bonnard, Blake and Kirchner, and perhaps above all of Sieneese Painting of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. We can see him as the history painter that he is – partly. It is not difficult to identify with his teasing out of his memories, the importance of his relationships with his friends, and, in particular, his love for his partner Judith, who has appeared again and again in the work throughout the last twenty years. These portraits of her are among his very few depictions of serenity and tranquillity, with no hint of the apocalyptic aspect that looms so large in some of his other works. They are not just documenting his time with her, or catching a moment in the narrative of his life, but painted as though in amazement at this love that has been bestowed on him. To a very considerable extent, I believe, his work is an inspired lifetime's dialogue with Judith.



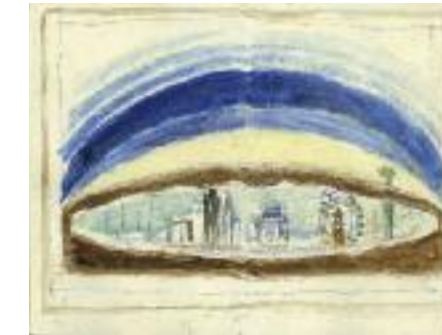
But there is much that cannot be easily understood; mysteries lying behind the obvious, ways of working that are difficult to grasp. His anti-pomp, anti-Roman attitude does not explain that (sometimes) awkwardness of expression. Is it that his democratic views are being expressed in a "you can do it too" manner? Does that evoke the accessibility of painting in fourteenth century Siena? - those years of "Good Government" in the Ideal City that have been of such importance to him. The easily identifiable roughness of the canvas and the sometimes scratchy brush mark (it's difficult to identify with perfection); is he saying here - this is only paint, "you too can see how it's made"?



The colours are not beguiling, the drawing sometimes appears unwieldy, the tonality of not much importance. There seems to be chaos and a wilderness that is not easy to penetrate. And yet, the viewer is drawn in, compelled to discover the narrative, to interpret the action, and in so doing the point to what sometimes seem to be painterly abbreviations becomes clear. The richness and depth of his own personalised culture forces its way through. The amazing clarity and perceptiveness of his writings on art is turned on its head in the paintings. Unlike the writing, the paintings do not explain. They don't quite describe either - they evoke. And they evoke neither reality nor metaphor precisely, but in some mysterious way the two bound up together. His image *I Bear London* is just what it says, London carried on his back, its burden heavily weighing him down. So it's not metaphor - after all there it is, in front of us - but it's certainly not reality either. Nor is it simply "imagination", but a rich and evocative combination of all these things. And this complex and on occasion confusing mix of imagery is the perfect vehicle for what is probably the most important of his many themes: his search for himself, the where am I, and the looking for me.



This complex appearance of the paintings can sometimes confuse the viewer; it has the effect of making one feel as though one is peering into his unconscious mind, and being offered a glimpse of the teeming life that is trying to emerge. Indeed it is emerging, because that is one of the miracles of painting: the works must be in advance of the artist's conscious mind, otherwise they become academic. Perhaps this is why his narratives are so full, it's not that he is fearful of leaving anything out - or perhaps he is - but rather that he has no choice in the matter.



And that dream-like cosmic view of himself and the City - is that simply painting wildly out of control? As in dreams there is no control, no choice; everything is directed from elsewhere. As Sebald writes in *Vertigo*:

I suppose it is submerged memories that give to dreams their curious air of hyper-reality. But perhaps there is something else as well, something nebulous, gauze-like, through which everything one sees in a dream seems, paradoxically, much clearer. A pond becomes a lake, a breeze becomes a storm, a handful of dust is a desert, a grain of sulphur in the blood is a volcanic inferno. What manner of theatre is it, in which we are at once playwright, actor, stage manager, scene painter and audience?

Or is it the incisiveness that we find in his writings purposely transformed and transcribed as visual richness onto the paintings? Is it a longing - a hidden longing - for an unattainable wildness, an identification with the primal and the

pagan, that lies disguised beneath these images? Disguised behind such subjects as the savouring of small moments – on a bus – having a salt-beef sandwich or a plate of spaghetti – food appears so frequently that his obvious enjoyment of it offers a reprieve from such moments as his meeting with himself – coming face to face with his own mortality – as death, whilst walking around his beloved London.



His work makes great demands on the viewer; the simultaneity of events – he wants us to see it all at once – himself as young, sometimes accepting, sometimes baleful, himself facing death, himself taking possession of the city, as in his *I Open my Heart to Reveal London Enshrined Within*. He's right, of course, painting is the only medium where this can be achieved, but once again, literally and metaphorically he's pushing the boundaries. The fantastic and grotesque appearing out of a context of putative normality, the peering into the distance that forces our attention away from the – possibly damaged? – people in the foreground, the architecture collapsing in on the protagonists. The precariousness, the unbalance, the dislocation of the spaces he depicts, the hazardous world in which his characters live. And the glee with which some of them seem to accept this unnerving situation they find themselves in. Are they fighting against their forced enclosure, the trap of the frame? Are they trying to escape, or are they forever fixed, as in Dante's *Inferno*? Or, in lighter vein, are they – or he – simply overcome with astonishment at the comedy of the human condition and the sense of the absurd?

This is an artist who has so much he needs to say about art and the world, that the paintings have become the result of a clash: between what pours unfettered from his brush, and the monstrous limitations of the formalities of the canvas, its boundaries and restraints that are part of the rules and restrictions of the

medium, and are so difficult to overcome. An ongoing battle between the essentially civilised and civilising nature of the man, and the pull towards the primeval and primitive that probably underpins much existing art.

What we are looking at here may be this clash of wills: but they are both his own; opposing each other, confronting and colliding, forever in conflict on the canvas.

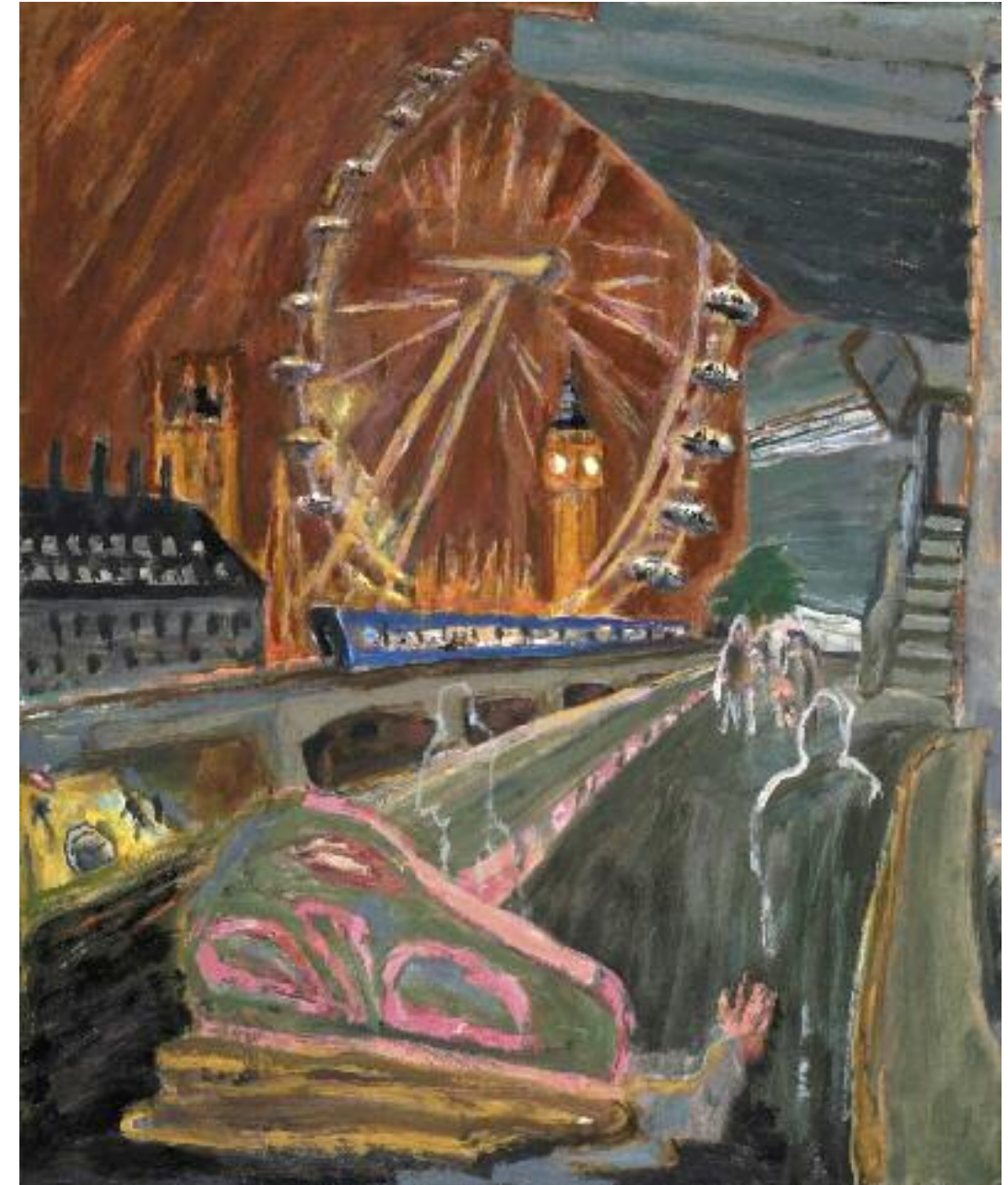
Tess Jaray 2008

Tess Jaray is one of Britain's leading abstract artists. Born in Vienna in 1937, she has exhibited widely, most recently at Purdy Hicks in 2001 and 2003, and at Lyon and Turnbull in 2008. Her solo public exhibitions include the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1973, the Whitworth in 1984, and the Serpentine Gallery in 1988. She has designed several major public spaces, and in 1995 received the RSA Jerwood Art for Architecture Award. Her work is represented in many public collections, including the Tate. Her diptych 'After Damascus' was awarded the Family Dupree Prize at this year's Royal Academy.

These images are from 'A Book of Emblems', which Timothy Hyman created in memory of the artist Bhupen Khakhar (1932-2003). Painted over a five-year period this pocket-sized book holds 38 images in an accordion format and has been published in a limited edition of 300 signed copies.



2. **Seeing Big Ben Through The Wheel**, 2009
Oil on board 89 x 76 cm





above:

3. **Waterloo Bridge**, 2007
Pencil on paper 30 x 60 cm

opposite:

4. **Utopian Thoughts While Crossing Waterloo Bridge**, 2009
Oil on board 60.5 x 127 cm

5. **Night Taxi** - Tamar Garb and Linda Nochlin, 2009
Oil on canvas 54 x 72 cm
Private Collection



6. **Ecce**, 2009
Oil on canvas 131 x 66 cm



TIMOTHY HYMAN'S PICARESQUE

The overarching metaphor in Tim's work is that of the individual life journey, and he often recounts this journey – his, and by extension, ours – as a series of harrowing or romantic, or sexually charged episodes: encounters with his wife Judith and old friends, evildoers and personal angels, looming skyscrapers, charging double-decker buses, flooding rivers... And even with Death. The viewpoint he adopts is what I would call Picaresque. For two reasons: first, because the "Timothy Hyman" depicted in his own paintings – a recognizable face painted at an odd angle, as if searching, slightly bewildered, for the way in to a landscape or person – seems to me a Trickster, a Pícaro, both participating in, and standing apart from, the action on the canvas. And second, because – as an artist now, not as a figure in his paintings – he turns the story he is "telling" on its head by shattering the rules of perspective and "proper" figuration. Tim seems ever eager to stir up trouble on his canvas and in the viewer's mind. He revels in collisions of line and confrontations of narrative, and he undermines our visual and emotional certainty with the mischievous joy and determined earnestness of any true Pícaro. And also with love. Perhaps this can be seen most clearly in his curving, intricate and anarchic depictions of London's streets and squares. By now – after 30 years of group and solo exhibitions – he has turned that city into the grand, urban Asgard of his own personal mythology. Tim is an adventurer of the heart who knows that life is tragic and terrible, but also absurdly comic and heroic. And who has decided to paint his vision of it all as best he can.

Richard Zimler 2009

Author of *The Last Kabbalist of Lisbon* and, more recently, *The Seventh Gate*



7. **Turning My Own Wheel**, 2009
Oil on canvas 162 x 130 cm





above:

8. **At Covent Garden, 2007**
Pencil on paper 31 x 57 cm

right:

9. **I Walk Down Grey Street, 2007**
Oil on card 79.5 x 110.5 cm



above:

10. **Ghent**, 2007
Pencil on paper 30 x 58 cm

opposite:

11. **The Great Mansions Ghent**, 2008
Oil on canvas 131 x 66 cm

AROUND BHUPEN

From 1980 onwards I became involved with a loosely-affiliated group of Indian artists, whose enthusiasms and aspirations often converged with my own. The painter Bhupen Khakhar was the central linking figure between us all. But he'd died in 2003, and it seemed these ageing friendships might become more tenuous. In February 2007, when I briefly revisited India after a twelve-year gap, I experienced a renewed surge of comradely affection – not least in our shared grief at Bhupen's loss. The idea came to me then of a commemorative group-portrait.

Altogether unexpectedly, a few months later, the National Portrait Gallery's BP Travel Award funded a further journey. I would set out to rediscover each of these friends "at the end of a pencil" – drawing them one by one, and, in my final days in a Bombay hotel, putting them together in a small acrylic compositional study.

Bhupen is in the sky; I am on the left, with Gulammohammed Sheikh; Vivan Sunderam, Geeta Kapur, Mrinalini Mukherjee, Sudhir Patwardhan, Amit Ambalal and Nilima Sheikh composing the central group, with Atul Dodiya coming in from the right margin.

Despite an undertow of melancholy, I've always associated Bhupen, and India, with Comedy. The imaginary setting is Chowpatty Beach, under Malabar Hill, in Bombay – the city where Bhupen grew up. Sixteen preparatory works were exhibited at the National Portrait Gallery in summer 2008, but the eventual two-metre canvas is being shown here for the first time.

Timothy Hyman 2009





above:

12. **Geeta Kapur**, 2007
Pencil on paper 31 x 36 cm

above right:

13. **Dillu (Mrnalini Mukherjee)**, 2007
Pencil on paper 37 x 47 cm

right:

14. **Amit Ambalal**, 2007
Pencil on paper 38 x 46 cm



above top:

15. **First study for *Around Bhupen*, Bombay**, 21st December 2007
Acrylic on board | 27 x 39cm

above:

16. **Second study for *Around Bhupen*, Bombay**, 21st December 2007
Acrylic on board | 27 x 39cm

17. **Around Bhupen**, (in progress July 2009)
Oil on canvas 122 x 198 cm





above:

18. **The Bookshops, Charing Cross Road, 2007**
Pencil 30 x 57 cm

left:

19. **Dinas Bran from the Window of the Hand Hotel, 2009**
Oil on wood 101.5 x 46 cm



CATALOGUE LIST

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Pencil on paper
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13. Dillu (Mrnalini Mukherjee), 2007
Pencil on paper
37 x 47 cm
14. Amit Ambalal, 2007
Pencil on paper
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15. First study for Around Bhupen, Delhi, 7th December 2007
Watercolour
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16. Second study for Around Bhupen, Bombay, 21st December 2007
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20. Boating with Sheikh and Nilima (Jaisalmer), 2008
Acrylic on board
38 x 37 cm
21. Ludgate Hill, Evening Sun, 2007
Pastel on paper
40 x 36 cm
22. A Book of Emblems, 2003-9
(reproduced on pp. 5/6/7 & 9)
watercolour on paper

TIMOTHY HYMAN

1946 Born in Hove, Sussex; brought up in London
 1963-67 Slade School of Fine Art, London

Solo Exhibitions

1981 Blond Fine Art, London
 1983 Blond Fine Art, London
 1984 Usher Gallery, Lincoln; Ferens Art Gallery, Hull, and touring
 1985 Westfield College, University of London
 Blond Fine Art, London
 1988 Contemporary Art Gallery, Ahmedabad, India
 1990 Austin/Desmond Fine Art, London*
 1993 Castlefield Gallery, Manchester
 1994 Gallery M (Flowers East), London
 Gallery Chemould, Bombay, India
 2000 *Mid River: Paintings and Drawings of a Decade*,
 Austin/Desmond Fine Art, London*
 2003 Austin/Desmond Fine Art, London*
 2006 *The Man Inscribed with London*, curated by Nurit David,
 Gallery of the Artists' Studios, Tel Aviv
 2006 *London Mappings and Panoramas*, Austin/Desmond Fine Art,
 London*
 2009 *The Man Inscribed with London*, Austin/Desmond Fine Art,
 London* (catalogue to be published September 2009)

Selected Group Exhibitions

1979-1980 *Narrative Paintings**, Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA)
 London;
 Arnolfini, Bristol, and touring
 1981/87 National Portrait Gallery
 1981 Hayward Annual*, London
 1982/83/86/88 Whitechapel Open, London
 1984 *A Singular Vision**, South London Art Gallery, and touring
 1985 In Their Circumstances*, Usher Art Gallery, Lincoln, and
 touring
Thirty London Painters, Royal Academy, London
*Human Interest**, Manchester Cornerhouse
 1986 *Past and Present**, Arts Council of Great Britain touring exhibition
*Self Portrait**, Bath Festival, and touring
 1988-99 Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, London (22 works)



20. **Boating with Sheikh and Nilima (Jaisalmer)**, 2008
 Acrylic on board 38 x 37 cm

1988 *The Subjective City**, Barbican Art Gallery, London; and touring
 1988/91/92/94 The South Bank Show. Royal Festival Hall, London
 1991 *Marks of Tradition*, MOMA, Oxford
 1991/94 EAST Open Exhibition*, Norwich
 1992 *An Edinburgh Suite*, Printmakers' Workshop, Edinburgh
 1993 *Witnesses and Dreamers**, Museum of London; and touring
 1994 *Drawing on These Shores**, Brighton Museum; and touring
 1995 *Timothy Hyman; Henry Kondracki; Jiro Osuga*, Flowers East, London
 1996 *The Motor Show*, Coventry Museum, and touring
 1997 *Contemporary British Figurative Painting**, Flowers East, London
 1999 *The Artist's Journey**, Leighton House, London; and touring
*Cheltenham Drawing Open**, touring to the Kunstakademie Berlin
 2000 *Self-made Men* (with Alex Katz, Red Grooms, Jim Nutt, etc.), D.C. Moore
 Gallery, New York
 2001 *Intimacy*, touring exhibition selected from the Arts Council Collection
 2003 *The Divine Comedy*, Michael Richardson, Artspace, London
 2004 Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, London
 Jerwood Drawing Prize, touring exhibition*
Visions of London, Michael Richardson, Artspace, London
*Taking on London**, Museum of London, Terrace Gallery, London Arts Café
 2005 *Hyman/Kondracki/Osuga*, Flowers East, London
 Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, London
Torn Stasis, Keith Talent Gallery, London
*London, City of Heaven, City of Hell**, Guildhall Art Gallery, London
*Drawing Inspiration**, Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Kendal
 2007 National Portrait Gallery (BP Travel Award) *
 2007 *Drawing Breath**, Wimbledon School of Art and tour
 2007 *Home and Garden*, Geffrye Museum, London*
 2007 *Gli Amici Pittori di Londra*, curated by Lino Manocci, Galleria Ceribelli,
 Bergamo, Italy (with Kitaj, Kiff, Jackowski, Davies etc) *
 2008 National Portrait Gallery (16 works)

Residencies & Awards, etc.

1983-84 Artist-in-Residence, Lincoln Cathedral
 1984-85 Artist-in-Residence, Westfield College, London
 1992 Artist-in-Residence, Sandown Racecourse
 1992 Leverhulme Award
 1993 Honorary Research Fellow, University College, London
 1995 Rootstein/Hopkins Award
 1998 Wingate Foundation Award
 2003-04 LAC grant to draw on London Eye
 2007 BP Travel Award (National Portrait Gallery)

Work in public collections

Los Angeles County Museum
Arts Council Collection
Brighton Art Gallery
Bristol City Art Gallery
The British Museum
Clifford Chance & Co.
Contemporary Art Society
Deutsche Bank Collection
Government Art Collection
The Museum of London
Pallant House, Chichester (Wilson Collection)
Sheffield City Art Galleries
South-East Arts Collection
Swindon Museum and Art Gallery
Usher Art Gallery, Lincoln
Westfield College (University of London)

Selected Bibliography

1981 Margaret Richards, *Tribune* (22 May)
William Feaver, *The Observer* (24 May)
John Roberts, *Artscribe* (June)

1982 Rasaad Jamie, *Artscribe* (issue xxxvii, October)

1983 Rasaad Jamie, *Artscribe* (issue xliv, December)

1985 Dave Lee, *Arts Review* (5 July)
William Feaver, *The Observer* (14 July)

1987 Andrew Graham-Dixon, *The Independent* (9 October)

1990 Norbert Lynton, catalogue essay, Timothy Hyman. *Recent Work* (London: *Austin/Desmond Fine Art*)
William Feaver, *The Observer* (14 October)

1991 Merlin James, *London Magazine* (February)
Tim Hilton, *The Guardian* (17 July)

1992 Alan Ross, catalogue essay, *Timothy Hyman at Sandown* (The Rosebriars Trust)

1993 Michael Butler, *City Life* (Manchester, 26 May)
Robert Clark, *The Guardian* (27 May)

1994 Dnyaneshwar Nadkarni, *The Times of India* (24 January)

1997 Isabel Carlisle, *The Times* (London, 29 August)

1998 Jed Perl, *The New Republic* (September)

2000 Julian Bell, *RA Magazine* (May)
Richard Morphet, "The Panorama of Midlife", *Timothy Hyman. Mid River: Paintings and Drawings of a Decade* (London: Austin/Desmond Fine Art)



21. **Ludgate Hill, Evening Sun, 2008**
Pastel on paper 40 x 36 cm

2001 Andrew Lambirth, *London Magazine* (February)

2002 "Interview with Timothy Hyman", *The London Arts Café Newsletter* (issue 10, Spring/Summer)

2003 "Timothy Hyman in conversation with Gabriel Josipovici", *Timothy Hyman – Recent Work* (London: Austin/Desmond Fine Art)
Jiro Osuga, *Art and Cities* (Autumn/Winter)

2004 David Ekserdjian, *Times Literary Supplement* (28 May)
Tom Lubbock, *The Independent* (18 December)
Thomas de Wesselow, *Art and Cities* (Autumn/Winter)

2005 David Gervais: *PN Review* (July/August)
TH extracts from residency diary, in CMYK CTY, *Miser and Now*

2006 Andrew Lambirth, *The Spectator* (21 January)
Tamar Garb / Itamar Levy, Introductions for *The Man Inscribed with London*, Tel Aviv
Ruti Director, *Yediot Aharonot* (7 April)
Uzi Tsur, *Haaretz* (7 April)

2006 William Packer, *Financial Times* (3 June)

2006 Jane Rye, *The Week*, (10 June)

2006 Lyndall Gordon in conversation with Timothy Hyman: "Is it a Linear Thing or a Circular Thing", introductory catalogue text to *London Mappings and Panoramas*, Austin/Desmond Fine Art

2007 Lino Manocci in *Gli Amici Pittori di Londra*, Bergamo, Italy

2008 National Portrait Gallery, Travel Diary for 'Around Bhupen'

2009 Tess Jaray / Richard Zimler, catalogue text for *The Man Inscribed with London*, (Austin/Desmond Fine Art)
[* catalogue published]

Timothy Hyman began to publish on painting in *London Magazine* in the late 1970s, and was a contributing editor to *Artscribe*. He also began to teach part-time in art schools, including the Slade, RCA and St Martin's. In 1979 he curated the controversial exhibition *Narrative Paintings*. In 1980 and 1982 he was a Visiting Professor in Baroda, India, completing extensive British Council lecture tours. Since 1990 he has contributed articles to the *Times Literary Supplement*. In 1998 his monograph on *Bonnard* was published by Thames and Hudson, and, in India, his book on *Bhupen Khakhar*. He curated the Hayward Gallery touring exhibition *Carnavalesque* in 2000 and was lead curator for the Tate Gallery's retrospective of *Stanley Spencer* in 2001. In 2003 Thames & Hudson published his monograph on *Sienese Painting*. He co-curated (with John Gage and Robert Hoozee) the major exhibition *British Vision*, in Ghent 2007-08.

Timothy Hyman

The Man Inscribed With London

Austin/Desmond Fine Art

7th October – 6th November 2009

Austin/Desmond Fine Art

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