

Brendan Neiland



Central city
2005
Oil on canvas



Changing times
2006
Oil on canvas



Highlight
2004
Oil on canvas

First impressions:

When I first look at Neiland's works, I see a flurry of bold colours merging into each other, yet at closer inspection I realise they are abstract reflections in the windows of modern buildings and skyscrapers.

These works make me think about what it's like to drop an object in a puddle as there is a similar principle in respect to the wavy – rippled like reflections created. I believe these works were made relatively quickly; this is because the paintings are well structured with an almost realistic effect to them suggesting time has been taken to achieve this photo like quality. These reflections have a rather loose swishy quality to them – they have no specific shape and so these aspects of Neiland's paintings may have been done quite quickly to achieve that loose nature of the reflections.

5 words I would use to describe these paintings would be; abstract, reflective, loose, flurry and sky.

Basic elements:

The colours used in these paintings are predominantly quite cold in the sense that they consist mainly of a range of blues because of the sky being reflected. There is a clash of bold colours creating that 'ripple' effect as if the buildings consist of water which is an interesting thought.

There's good use of contrasting, sharp, geometrical precise shapes with loose shapeless objects. The reflective surfaces of the buildings in these paintings are all made up of windows which can be seen at closer inspection; these windows show symmetrical and geometrical precision and there is a sense of perspective in many cases; however there is also the loose wavy shapes of the reflections shown on the windows.

The paintings create the illusion of a 'watery' like effect, and so give the viewer the illusion that the paintings are smooth and 'watery'.

Tonal shading isn't a major aspect shown by these paintings due to the mainly reflective, flat nature of the buildings in the paintings which mainly catch light and reflect it off their shiny surfaces. However there is some tonal glazes seen in the reflections on the building to suggest other buildings are being reflected off them.

Content:

The paintings consist mainly of reflective high rise buildings which we are made to assume because of the effect created with the sky being reflected off the buildings. Within the reflections of the buildings are other buildings which we can see although they are quite blurred and wavy. These paintings are very specific in what they convey – there is no one or other major object within the paintings apart from the building and the reflections perceived on them.

I think these paintings were done from observation and imagination; the buildings I believe were painted from observation, however the reflections on them are more loose and less structural than the actual buildings on which they

reflected on, and so I believe the reflections were painted both through some observation and some improvisation.

If I was to give the work my own title, I would call it '*High rise ripples*'.

Mood and atmosphere:

Neiland focuses on aspects of the cityscape, an environment so potentially rich and yet so often neglected. Neiland encourages the viewer to review their environments and feel a greater sense of involvement, ownership and participation. In this way the painting gives the sense of action. This creative interplay between abstraction and representation is fundamental to the nature of the work. If I was to empathise with these works, I would feel 'reinvigorated' – alive, like a bird soaring through the sky, and 'sky' is a key word, there is the sense of the sky being reflected from the buildings as if it is the sky with the buildings 'floating within it'; which gives the viewer the gravity defying effect, as if you are in the sky, and so the paintings are very interesting in this respect.

Materials and techniques:

The technique which Neiland employs is to ensure a fusion of method and imagery. Neiland begins by researching which then leads to a series of drawings which invents and defines the imagery. The drawings then become the templates through which the paintings are carried out. This unique method allows for a form of glazing, a means of developing richness and subtlety in the colour and an uninterrupted surface save for changes in hue, tone and structure. The very subject matter, the result of the research, determines the means of the painting.

Neiland used the paint quite precisely to achieve the geometrical precision of the buildings and yet uses a more loose technique to paint the reflections which look like reflections on a rippling pond.

Context:

Brendan Neiland was keeper of The Royal Academy Schools for two years, and enjoys continued success as a painter and printmaker. Brendan cites the work of Fernand Leger, who was the first artist to use the awkward contemporary environment, as a key to inspiration. Brendan has also studied closely the interiors of Vermeer in Amsterdam, the extravagance of Gaudi in Barcelona and the black intensity of Goya in Madrid during his extensive travels around Europe. These influences, together with a pre-occupation for the industrial aspects of Britain, have helped Brendan to encourage people, through his work, to appraise their environments and feel a greater sense of involvement in them.

Composition:

I think these works were quite carefully planned as they all have a vibrant sense of realism within the images, which must have therefore had a reasonable amount of planning. The paintings are all figurative - relating to the city and modern life throughout the abstract glimpses of buildings with their formal structures, reflections of light, and use of saturated colour.

Neiland cleverly reconstructs those glimpses of everyday life in his paintings, with precise depictions of geometrical shapes and diagonal lines shaping the panes of glass that make up the building creating a real sense of perspective, and so Neiland takes us into the paintings through these geometrical perspectives.

Links:

I chose this artist's works because it links in with my project in the sense that I am planning to have buildings within my project; also reflections are quite an important part of my project which I would like to manipulate in order to convey my view on modern life. The abstract quality to Neiland's paintings with glimpses of building reflections is an aspect I want to implement within my project as well, in that I plan to incorporate glimpses of reflections of the modern city with a building or a car for example.

However my project has an overall different role to that of Neiland's paintings in that Neiland primarily paints abstract views of only part of a building reflecting other buildings; however I want to encapsulate the whole city within a reflection on a car for example with high rise buildings possibly surrounding the car.

Evaluation:

I believe Neiland is pleased with his pieces of work, and I like the rich quality to them; shown by the vibrant colours used to emphasise certain aspects of reflections that may otherwise be inconspicuous to the everyday person, and so in this respect Neiland cleverly manipulates the paint in order to achieve these bold qualities.

If I could ask Neiland a question, I would ask him what inspires him to paint abstract cityscapes.