

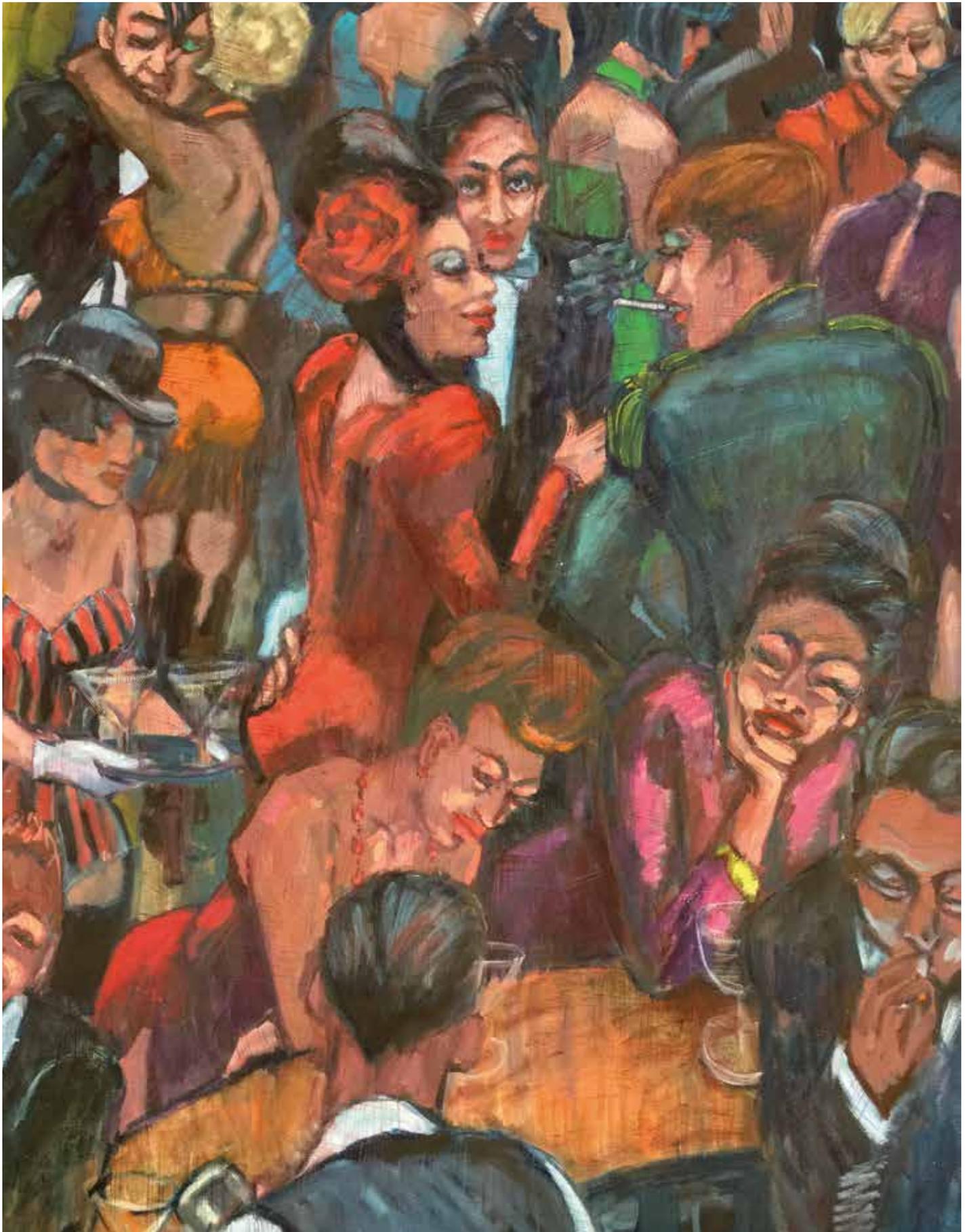
LIMITED EDITIONS

Putting on the Dickens

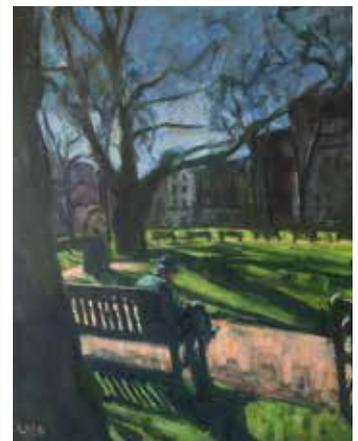
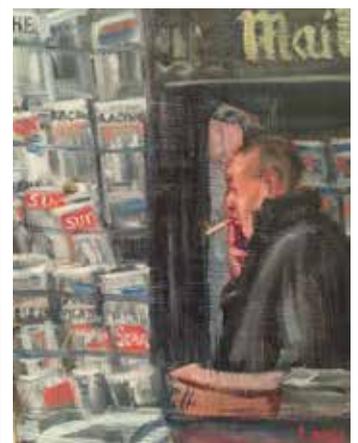
THEO WOODHAM SMITH MEETS GREAT-GREAT-GRANDDAUGHTER OF THE INIMITABLE CHARLES, LUCY DICKENS, AN ARTIST IN LOVE WITH LONDON LIFE AND ONE WHO IS PARTICULARLY INSPIRED BY THE MYSTERIOUS OPULENCE OF THE RITZ

The Ritz. The name itself exudes luxury, elegance, pleasure and fun, thanks to a Swiss farmer's son, César Ritz himself, a young apprentice waiter dismissed with a patronising phrase "no flair for anything" and who became "King of Hoteliers, and Hotelier to Kings". He opened the doors of his London Ritz in 1906, a "small house in which I am proud to see my name attached".

The architecture was French château style, the furnishings Louis Seize. Ritz introduced refinements such as bathrooms for every guest room, double-glazing, brass rather than wooden beds, all unique to London at that time. The Ritz soon became the grandest hotel in the world, attracting from its earliest years the most fashionable, rich and influential people, from the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) and the English aristocracy. King Alfonso of Spain and Queen Amelie of Portugal met in the hotel. The vastly rich Aga Khan and oil magnate Paul Getty, both connoisseurs of beautiful women, kept permanent suites.



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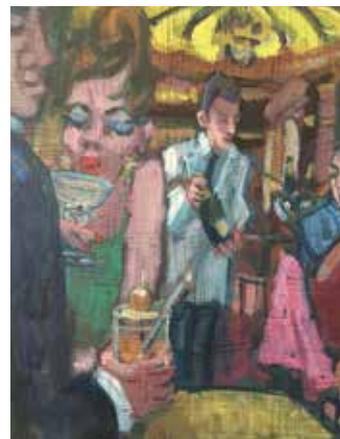
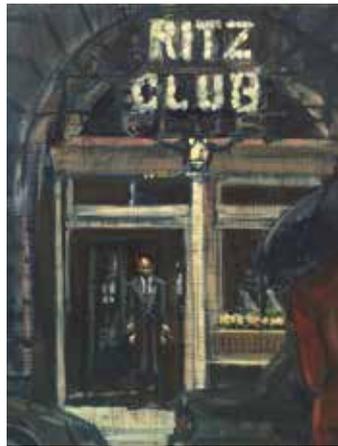


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After The Show

This page,
clockwise from top left:
Doormen, Newspaper Stand,
Berkeley Square Early Spring



MY FATHER, A YOUNG AND PENNILESS JOURNALIST, TOOK MY MOTHER TO THE CHAMPAGNE BAR AT THE RITZ BEFORE THEY WERE MARRIED. MANY YEARS LATER I STILL FIND THE RITZ HAS A MAGICAL QUALITY, UNMATCHED BY MODERN BUSINESS HOTELS



This page, clockwise from top right: Mandarin Oriental, Cocktails In The Rivoli Bar, Dining Room, Casino

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Anna Pavlova, the Russian prima ballerina worshipped and fêted around the world, and, as any rock god might be today, danced at The Ritz. Winston Churchill, Charles de Gaulle and Eisenhower met for summit meetings in the Marie Antoinette suite, our revered Queen Elizabeth chose

The Ritz for private birthday parties, and Margaret Thatcher spent her last days cared for in a suite at The Ritz.

Lucy Dickens describes her special attachment to The Ritz, which may be linked to a cherished romantic ideal: "I am told that my father, as a young and penniless journalist for the *Daily Telegraph*, took my mother to the Champagne Bar at the Ritz for a date before they were married. Many years later I still find the Ritz has a magical quality, unmatched by modern business hotels".

It may also be that The Ritz with its famous nymph of the Palm Court fountain appears to give visitors a strange sense of taking a holiday from time. One writer called the tempo "calm, confident and leisurely". César Ritz said that nothing put people more at their ease in his hotels than the

blandishment of tactful lighting. He spent many hours trying the effects of different coloured shades on his wife's complexion. "A delicate apricot pink was found to be the most becoming colour," wrote Madame Ritz in her husband's biography.

Lucy Dickens calls herself "a people watcher, a nosey parker with a vivid imagination". She too spends hours in this rose-tinted light, lurking with her sketchbook, but as a true Dickensian, she observes and records the scene, with a gently satirical take on her subjects.

Left:
Lucy Dickens



My characters are based on real people, but they become larger than life as the painting progresses. What's the story with that group of men in the hotel bar? Are they planning a heist? Or just discussing a board meeting? Look at the doorman - what dramas has he witnessed over the years?

She loves the glitter and the gold of grand hotels, especially The Ritz, where the waiters, the porters and the barmen quietly attend to the orders of lipsticked blue-lidded ladies in body-con frocks, blow dries and high heels. Palace hotels and fancy restaurants are “wonderful stages” she says, “full of pomp and circumstance, costumes, uniforms and old traditions enacted daily as the guests come and go”.

Lucy also thinks of herself as a “camera”, a painter-reporter sitting quietly in The Ritz lounge with her coffee and biscuits, making little sketches of people chatting, or simply promenading, her eyes darting about to capture scenes from any angle. These sketches turn into full-scale paintings in her North London studio.

In her own words: “My characters are based on real people, but they become larger than life as the painting progresses. What's the story with that group of men in the hotel bar? Are they planning a heist? Or just discussing a board meeting? Look at the doorman - what dramas has he witnessed over the years?”

Lucy Dickens began her career as a full time artist in 1990. After a spell as fashion stylist for Condé Nast, she became a freelance illustrator, working for the *Financial Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Daily Mail*, *Vogue*, *Brides*, *Harpers Bazaar* and *Tatler*.

She began to paint while writing and illustrating a series of children's books, which were successfully published in London and New York. Her particular gift is to convey the spontaneity of

the scene before her. That edgy Central London glamour that she knows so well from years working in Berkeley Square, informs her work, though the Waldorf Astoria, Manhattan, produced a fascinating insight during a recent trip to New York too.

Lucy Dickens is influenced by 20th century painters who chronicled scenes of city life, engaging the imagination with a mini-drama: Edward Hopper in America with his cinematic style, the abrasive artists recording the decadence of 1920s Berlin, and Degas for bringing poetry to the everyday.

A solo show of her London experience will be exhibited at The Osborne Studio Gallery on 27 April. ●

Lucy Dickens
27 April - 13 May 2016
The Osborne Studio Gallery
2 Motcomb Street
London SW1X 8JU