

Barbara Ursel

Artist Statement

My paintings explore the emotional and visual character of familiar places.

I am drawn predominantly to urban landscapes: streets, buildings and the human activity within them—not as subjects to be documented, but as starting points for exploring perception, memory, light, and atmosphere. A particular place may inspire a painting, but then the painting evolves through a process of simplifying, rearranging and reimagining what I see.

Light is central to my practice. It reveals and obscures, divides and connects, and continually alters our experience of the built and natural environment. I am just as interested in the shadows the light creates—the spaces between things, and the unexpected shapes and relationships that emerge when familiar surroundings are transformed by changing light.

Working primarily in acrylic, I build paintings through successive layers of opaque and transparent colour. I simplify architectural forms, vegetation, figures and other observed elements into planes, shapes and painterly passages. As a painting develops, recognizable places begin to move toward abstraction. I am interested in that point of tension where a scene can still be identified, yet is no longer simply a description of a particular place.

My intention is to create paintings that invite sustained contemplation. I want the viewer to enter the space of the painting, discover relationships between light, colour, shadow and form, and, perhaps, recognize something of their own experience within it. The specific place that prompted a painting matters to me but, ultimately, I am interested in what happens when a familiar place becomes something more ambiguous, atmospheric and personal.