

The day began with a stroll east along the Regent's Canal to Cambridge Heath and Vyner street, to meet with the lovely ladies of Degree Art, my favourite gallery in London. Along the way I received an email from **Is**:

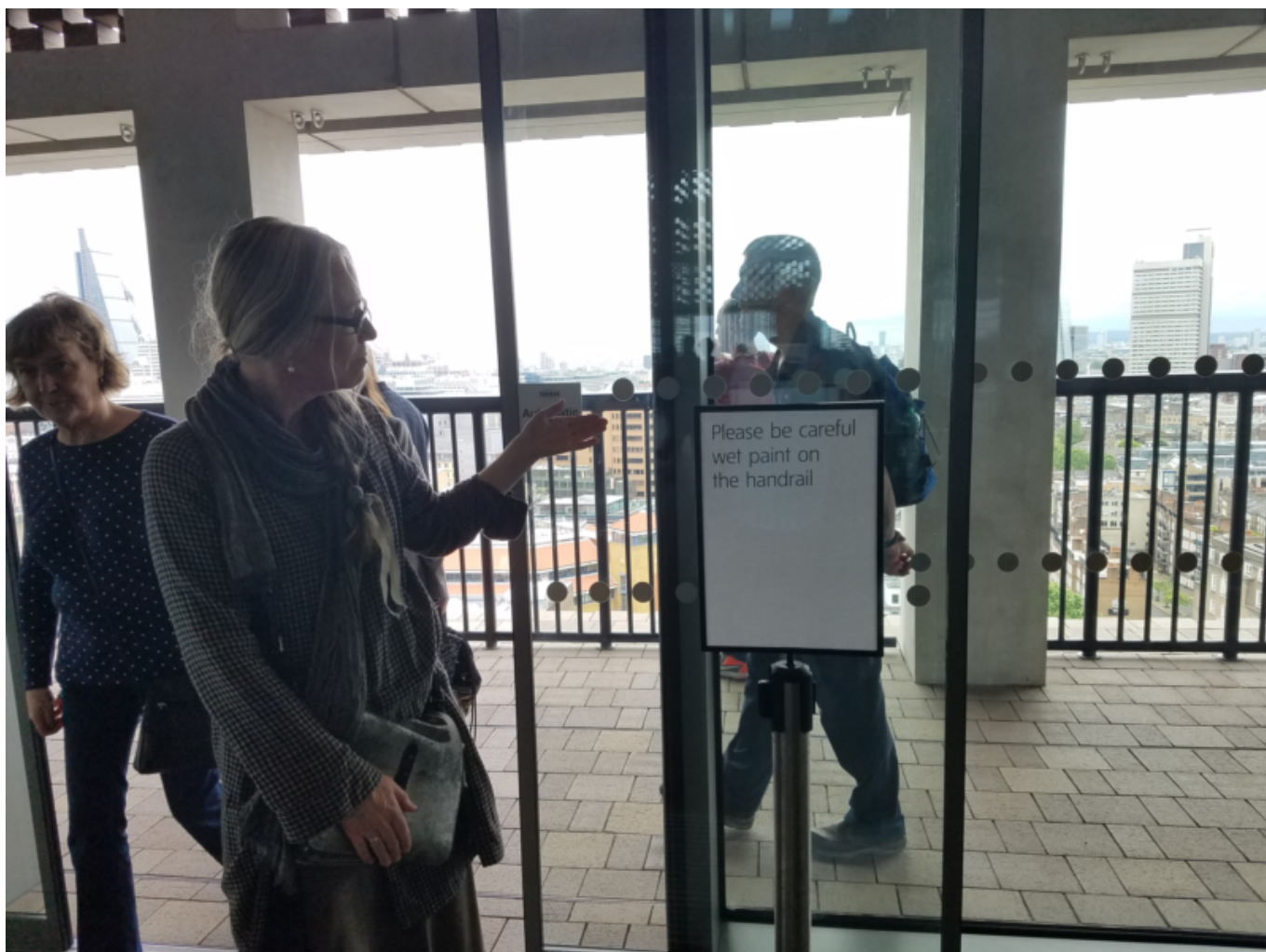
Am currently sitting in the coffee shop on the corner of Vyner St as I had to lend my keys to one of the members of staff yesterday and because of the storms and flooding, the trains are very delayed and everyone is running behind schedule, so if I spot you coming down Vyner Street before I get into the gallery, I might leap out and grab you for a coffee in here!

There had been raging thunderstorms in the overnight. Nothing too severe to my Midwestern sensibilities, but quite out of the ordinary here.

Sure enough I found **Is** sitting in the cafe, and as we waited for the rest to show up, we had a nice chat about art & business. Then off to the gallery to look over some new artists and confer on recent purchases. **A** joined us there, and once all was sorted, she & I said our farewells and hopped a bus down to Millennium bridge and over that to Tate Modern and its new Switch House expansion.

The Switch House represents a significant expansion of the already mammoth Tate complex, and is a stunner. Rising 10 storeys, just to the south of the Boiler House and Turbine Hall, Switch House springs from large concrete silo bases. We first queue with many others for one of the four elevators to the observation deck on 10. Shockingly, each elevator is quite small, claiming a capacity of 17 each, but we figure more like 12. People pack into each car, often to the point where doors won't close. The whole lift situation seems poorly considered.

Here are views from the 10th floor:



**A** points out just how new this addition is; the paint is still wet!



The Shard, commonly known as The Salt Cellar.







The neighbours likely didn't expect this level of exposure.









New Blackfriar's Bridge.





St Paul's, across the Millennium Bridge, Boiler House in the foreground. Once done on 10, we descended to 9 for the restaurant. We were seated, ordered a glass of champagne, and made our selections — blue cheese soufflé starter and lemon sole main — when all of a sudden a klaxon sounded and a voice came over the PA, "Please follow your steward's instruction and evacuate the building by the nearest exit." Lovely. We walked down countless flights of stairs and spilled out into the rear courtyard. Here's the crowds outside







We did ultimately get back inside, but had to settle for a rubbish meal at Leon's. Here's some of the art from the permanent and temporary exhibits within:









We did try to go back up the tower, to the member's lounge on 8, but the lifts were totally unusable, and after waiting about 15 minutes, we gave up. Grumpy, we left Tate. "Coffee and cake!" declared **A**, and off to Paul, a posh French patisserie, we went.



Shortly after we settled in to chairs at Paul, with our coffee and cakes, a downpour ensued.Â Everyone in the shop looked on with awe at the sheer volume of water coming down; fists full of rain lashed the windows and overtopped the table umbrellas outside the door.Â We hid out there over an hour, waiting for the storm to clear.Â I went to find the gents, and what I found was a toilet spewing shit into the air, overwhelmed by the torrents of rain hitting the sewers.





A long, grueling bus ride up to Camden Town took us to Oxford Arms and Etcetera Theatre for Rubber Duck Theatre's production of *Rapture*.<sup>Â</sup> This taut little show envisions a near future in which medical wonders have rendered much disease moot, and with the long lives which ensue, there is now a need to cull the population.<sup>Â</sup> The process by which this happens is the Citizen Review.<sup>Â</sup> Our four protagonists are there to represent, to justify their existence.<sup>Â</sup> A fifth, the auditor, is there to facilitate the process.

I won't delve further into details, but it was a good and thought provoking piece of social commentary, especially crisp on this night of Brexit.<sup>Â</sup> Kudos to the entire cast, who took on archetypal roles with gusto and nuance (more than was written for them) and found humanity within each of them.