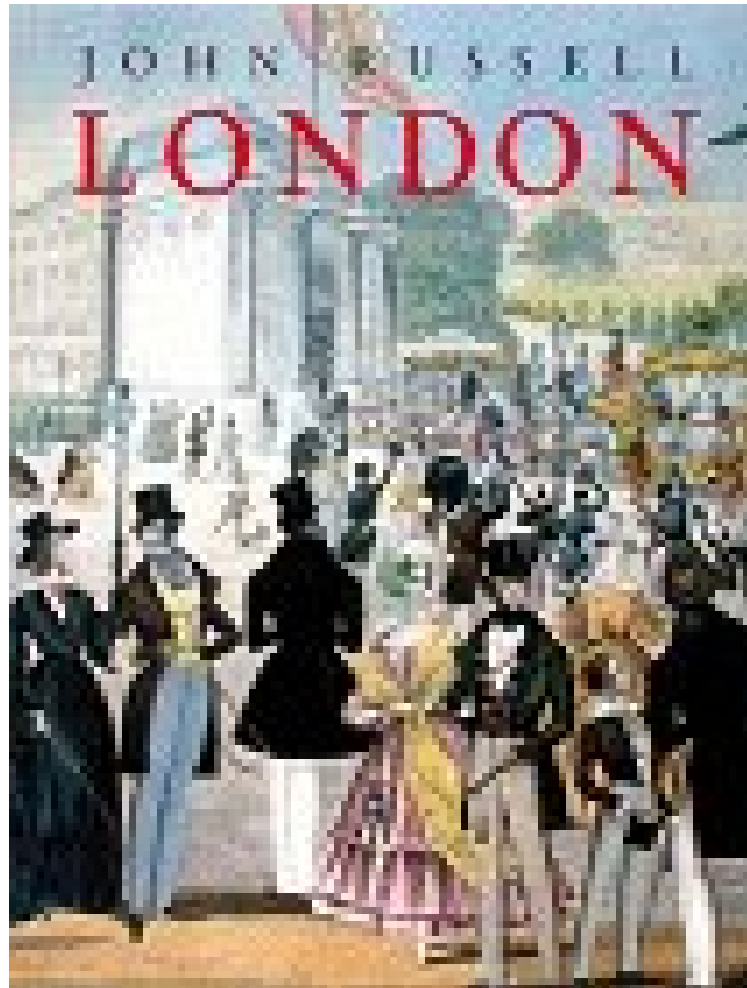


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John Russell

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John Russell : London before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised London:

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy dudnpadReview already written.7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. The City as it **should** be experienced . . .By Michael K. SmithThe much-honored Russell spent nearly thirty years as chief art critic for the London Sunday Times, and then came to New York and did the same thing for the New York Times for another sixteen years. Even after leaving London, though, he still considers himself an insider of that city, and in this book he shares his fifty-year perspective with the reader. It's not a guidebook nor a travel book, but a highly idiosyncratic sort-of-memoir of London, organized around many diverse themes, including Samuel Johnson, Buckingham Palace, the rebuilding of the city after the Great Fire, the role of the Thames, and what he calls the "spirit of place" -- which is one of the best chapters in this marvelous book.

Throughout, he illustrates his thoughts and recollections and often witty commentary with reproductions of art and photographs of people and buildings which, brought together in one place like this, are just about worth the price of the book by themselves. One of the best books about London I've seen in years. 10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. The Artists' London By FrKurt MessickJohn Russell has put together in this book, simply entitled London, a wonderful guide to the memory of London in word and, most especially, visual images. Lavishly illustrated and bejeweled with paintings, photographs, drawings and maps, this is the ultimate 'coffee table' book on London. But please, don't set your coffee (or, as it is a book on London, more appropriately, tea) cup on it, and don't just let it sit there. Peruse the pages -- no reading required! Although, unless I miss my guess, you will want to read these pages that accompany such wonderful visual treats. Russell includes drawings by Wren (who practically rebuilt London after the fire of 1666) for whom there is no monument ('If you want to see a monument, look around', he is once reported to have said, meaning the abundance of architectural monuments most of which remain to this day), Carter, Gilbert, Soane, Kip Knyff (a print of the original drawing for Buckingham House, now Palace). Among the paintings are all famous portraiture and landscapers, scenes royal and common, serious and fanciful. Nearly 200 illustrations, including almost 100 full-colour plates of paintings, make this book a stunning edition. Russell recounts an early comment on urban renewal, by Francis Bacon, who commented upon buying a house in an unsafe neighbourhood: 'I have bought the house in which I shall be murdered.' But, within a year, the Foreign Minister had purchased the neighbouring house, making the area safe and sought-after. Russell said that the changes talked about here [and generally everywhere in the history of London] owe nothing to Authority. No government planned them, foresaw them, or sanctioned them. They are owed to the experimental, liberated, and sardonic temper of the individual Londoner as it has evolved. 'Like every other big city in the western world, London was built for a society that no longer exists.' This one statement perhaps best sums up the history of London. This book gives new life to that departed society, and helps to put London in its proper context. This was obviously a labour of great love on the part of Russell. Do yourself and favour and purchase the hard-back edition. You will be glad you did.

For John Russell, author of the highly successful Paris as well as a score of other volumes, writing London was a labor of love. English by birth, Russell lived in London for nearly 50 years, and here he offers a matchless tour of the key aspects of the city and its notable citizens through the centuries. 183 illustrations, including 86 in full color.

From Publishers Weekly Art critic Russell present a lavishly illustrated history of London. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal A reminiscence of times experienced and histories explored, this offering is a very personal look at a city of infinite attractions that has captured the hearts and imaginations of generations of natives and visitors alike. Russell, an eminent writer on the arts for over 50 years, brings to life, through anecdote, illustrations, and memoir, the city of London from its re-creation after the Great Fire of 1660 through the great fires of World War II and up to the present. He takes us into the world of Wren and Constable, Boswell and Handel, Shaw and Olivier, and Lucian Freud and R.B. Kitaj in this love letter to what is less a geographic concept than a state of mind and memory. Recommended both for Anglophiles and everyone else waiting to be convinced. Paula Frosch. Metropolitan Museum of Art Lib., New York Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus s An elegantly idiosyncratic, leisurely and--at its most successful--revealing stroll through London's highways and byways that transcends the coffee-table genre. A long-time art critic for the the New York Times, British-born Russell is an erudite guide to the city he made his home for over 50 years (if one at times rather too fond of the sound of his own voice). He takes the reader on a wholly personal, unsystematic, yet surprisingly thorough ramble through London's long history and its labyrinthine social topographies as well as its protean physical aspect. Though he occasionally lapses into travelogue bromides ("there is no better school of life than the streets of a great city"), more often Russell succeeds in finding neglected perspectives that help us reimagine a city made overfamiliar by mass tourism and media: a history of London's 19th-century salon culture, an explanation of what goes on behind the closed doors of the city through a history of its architecture, and, throughout, a refreshing emphasis on London as the living and working home of millions of ordinary folk rather than a picturesque museum. Having come to know the city in its imperial twilight, Russell does sometimes fall prey to nostalgic Edwardianisms (for instance, in his rose-tinted and pompous descriptions of Parliament); but at his best he combines the historian's long view, the aesthete's appreciative gaze, and the social critic's inquiring eye to paint a bracingly complex picture of a city whose heritage continues to evolve--such as his account of the Docklands transformation from commercial and imperial hub to the sometimes combustible social laboratory of the new London. At its unstuffy best, Russell's "tour" is brought to vivid life by his unfailingly apposite selection of paintings, engravings, architects' drawings and photographs, in general excellently reproduced (though on occasion large-scale images have been reduced beyond comfortable scrutiny). Russell for the most part offers the armchair traveler and the inquiring mind alike five-star service. (183 illustrations, 86 in color) (Book-of-the-Month Club dividend selection) -- Copyright ©1994, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.