



CRITICS' CHOICE

THEATRE HENRY HITCHINGS "Its dreaminess is self-conscious and gives limited pleasure"

RESTAURANTS FAY MASCHLER "I can imagine that some evenings might end in a lock-in and a food fight with tweezers"

MUSIC DAVID SMYTH "An elaborate sci-fi fantasy theme was maintained throughout, loaded with lasers and dancers"

READER REVIEWS

THEATRE RICHARD, FALING "A good opportunity lost, I wanted answers but it just felt thin and frivolous"

RESTAURANTS RAFFAELE, BATTERSEA "Amazing food amazing restaurant best value for money EVER!!!!"

MUSIC PAUL, LONDON "What's the point in a singer with interesting lyrics (well some of the time) if she has a band that thrashes all over them"

RESTAURANT REVIEWS LONDON, TUESDAY 11.05.10 The Portrait Cuisine: British, Modern a meal for two with wine, about £84 including 10 per cent service. - St Martin's Place, WC2 0HE

Pretty picture of rooftop dining By Fay Maschler, None 23.05.00 More reviews by Fay Maschler

This review was first published in May 2000 Related links Playing to the galleries

So slow have we been in this city to treat its river as anything more than a dividing stream, that a view which homes in on it, as does that from the sensational (in my opinion) Tate Modern, seems unbeatable.

The architects, Sir Jeremy Dixon and Edward Jones, have taken the gentlemanly line, designing in the top-floor restaurant a discreet viewing platform for vistas that were once the province only of pigeons. It is not just that we can now see Lord Nelson silhouetted in the sky from behind, propped up by a hitherto uncelebrated coil of rope, but we can study details of buildings that must once have been stipulated for their architects' spiritual satisfaction, not for the common gaze.

Two rows of windows in the restaurant, one set back and high above the other, divide the sky. On a day of changeable weather, which it was when we lunched last Friday, the effect is filmic; totally engrossing. The gun-metal grey walls of the restaurant and the lighter grey of aprons worn by the waiting staff fit into this cinemato-graphic world coloured only by soft tints.

The catering is in the hands of Searcy's which employs Richard Corrigan as consultant. Head chef Kerwin Browne worked with Corrigan at Fulham Road Restaurant and more recently was sous-chef at The Red Room at Waterstone's, Piccadilly. His menu is predictably robust, with much that I would classify as tempting.

Pea soup with croutons and savoury summer herbs was perfectly balanced, avoiding that over-sweetness that can bedevil pea soup. Foie gras and celeriac terrine was an odd pairing that worked surprisingly well. My companion who seems to be on a mission of eating fish and chips in every gallery in London, chose deep-fried plaice fillet with fat-cut chips and tartare sauce, which were prepared with the finesse a national dish deserves.

Salt cod fish cake with artichoke salad and aioli, a dish which you might say puts the modern into modern British was a beautifully made patty, the fish having flaked into slightly oily shards, and the artichoke hearts mixed into a salad with roasted vegetables was ideal accompaniment. The side order of mixed green salad which added £3 to its £12.50 cost was nice but not necessary. Had I not known that I would be eating leftover chicken for supper at home that evening, I would like to have tried roast organic chicken with bread pudding and tarragon jus.

Among the desserts are rhubarb trifle; honey and lemon cake with rosemary ice-cream; chocolate millefeuille with raspberry compote and the rather less enticing sounding tapioca brulée with warm plum jam. The Women's Institute overtones of the last might well appeal to the gangs of little grey-haired ladies in ankle socks who colonise art galleries, and who, I was pleased to observe, have taken to this business of serious lunching like ducks to water. The manageress was having trouble controlling them. As at Tate Modern, there is opportunity for evening eating; here on Thursdays and Fridays.

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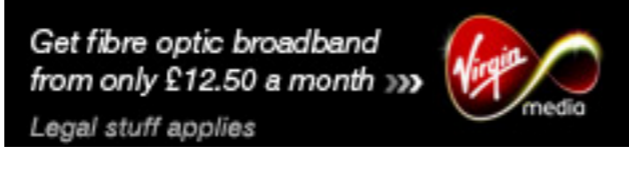
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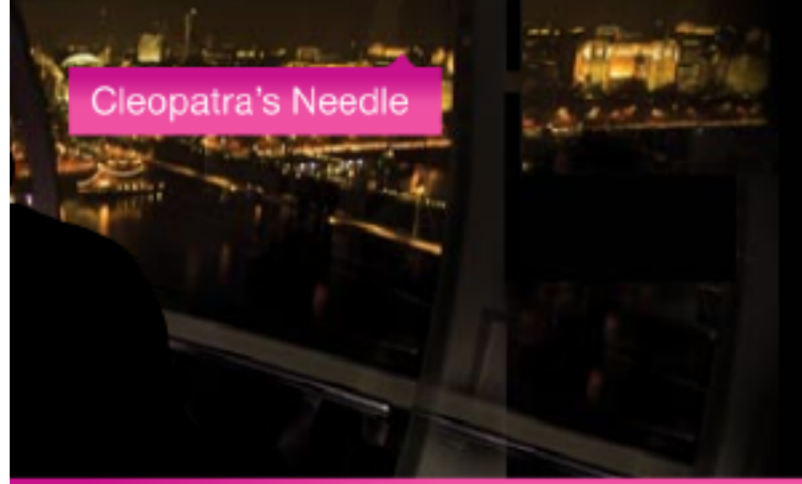
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