All his life, Leon Kossoff has felt compelled to draw and paint his native city in the nearest that he has ever come to giving an interview, the artist, self-effacing as ever, explains to Charlotte Higgins how he has spent decades trying to get it right.

London calling

Leon Kossoff, 70, now lives in a brand new house near Euston station, which he bought after having to leave the Westminster council house he used to live in, because the rent was too high. He has been drawing and painting for over 50 years and has had several exhibitions in London and around Britain. His work is known for its realism and his use of everyday objects as subjects.

Kossoff was born in 1934 in London, the son of Russian immigrants. He studied at the Royal College of Art and has been influenced by the works of John Lavery and Sir John Lavery. His paintings are often of ordinary working-class life, such as market stalls, cafes, and shops.

Kossoff is best known for his paintings of London, particularly his depictions of the city's streets and buildings. His work has been exhibited in several major galleries, including the Tate Gallery and the National Gallery. He has also received several awards for his work, including the John Moores Prize in 1980.

Kossoff's work is often characterized by a sense of realism and a focus on the ordinary. He has said that he is interested in capturing the essence of the city rather than simply depicting it. His paintings often have a sense of nostalgia, as he seeks to capture the spirit of London in a way that is true to the city's history.

Kossoff has said that his work is a form of self-expression, and that he uses it as a way of exploring his own feelings and thoughts. He has also said that he is interested in the way that art can be used to communicate with others, and that he hopes his work will continue to be relevant in the future.
K&N going on... Last Kaskii (below left) with main picture) Dakelone June No.1 (1974) and Mildford Hotel Commissary

...that image would emerge only after many months of applying and then...}

...Kossii has frequently been drawn in landscapes that suggest a state of transition, when because they are undergoing physical change, such as the 1974 building of the Old Park Hotel, or because they are, like the station or midway lines, the zones of human on the move. (Anon. Church, Staphilina, which he painted for years, its facade being non-existent, and then later, when the old church was turned into a school, it...)}

...Kossii’s territory is, more frequently, the southwest, the road-side, the demolition site, the Sawyer school building seen from across a busy road, the underground station. These views proved...}

...It is a question of the eye and the mind, he says. They are the kind of landscapes that many people would hesitate to regard as “art”, but that carry their own rough loneliness. Perhaps everything beautiful...}