

Michael David Roberts

**Imaging the Face: An Investigation into Hyperrealist
Depictions of the Human Facial Surface**

PhD Thesis, Aberystwyth, 2013

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed.
And on the pedestal these words appear:
`My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings:
Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away".

Ozymandias, Percy Bysshe Shelley (1819)

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Abstract

This thesis details a practice-led investigation into the potential for a hyperrealist rendering of the human face through painting. The primary objective of this practice is to ascertain the best means of conveying sensation and evoking experiences incurred when conducting a sustained visual analysis of the facial features.

Traditional portrait imagery utilises the face as the most immediate means of identification in depicting the identity and personality of the human subject. This thesis examines the ways in which our familiarity of portrait conventions impacts on the way in which facial images, in general, are interpreted. Therefore, the conceptual framework underpinning the practical element of this project, aims to reduce the significance of the individual and the potential for physiognomic interpretations within the facial image.

This study is informed by philosophical notions surrounding the way in which images function as communicative devices, in order to find possibilities for facial imaging that avoid the signification of individuality. This study presents an exposition of ideas examining the ways in which a lack of a prescribed meaning within a painting can accentuate the ability of a painting to generate sensations. The physical implementation of the conceptual framework combines hyperrealist methods with realist methods and techniques to achieve a visual approximation of the facial surface in order to recollect bodily experience of sight and touch within the viewer. An account of the techniques and methods used to implement this conceptual framework are detailed. In producing these facial images, my original contribution to the field of portraiture is to demonstrate that a reduction of individualisation in the process of imaging the face, in conjunction with an increase of surface information, promotes sensations within the viewer that connect to bodily experience of vision, touch and memories of flesh and skin.

Preface

My interest in facial imaging was stirred whilst reading Robert Storr's book on the American photorealist *Chuck Close* (1998). Close's large scale, technically impressive, painted portraits of friends and family presented a contemporary means of conducting a highly detailed, mimetic representation of reality, freed from the conventions of traditional portrait imagery. Having read a number of detailed accounts outlining Close's painting technique, I decided to replicate his process, to see if it was possible for me to achieve a similar level of detail and representational accuracy within a painting.

The resulting artwork proved successful and from this initial painting two distinct creative pathways emerged. One pathway was an interest in photographic distortions as a means of abstracting the contents of an image; the way in which lens flares, depth of field and soft-focus effects could produce large areas of flat colour, or add a colour harmonies across the images, bringing a formal, colourific unity across the illusory surface formed one area of exploration.

The second pathway was in the potential for the materiality of paint to effectively render the tactile qualities of skin and flesh. This led to an analysis of artists that had explored similar areas: Rembrandt, Lucian Freud, Jenny Saville and Frank Auerbach in particular. Having gained an insight in to these artists' practices, I set about producing a black and white painting that used a photograph as a basis for a painterly rendering of the facial surface, where thick layers of paint approximated the wrinkles and folds of weathered skin.

A part of researching these practices involved visiting the National Portrait Gallery in London, in order to gain an understanding into how artists had approached the practicalities of representing the human face. Within that sea of faces it occurred to me how little interest I held for the individuals depicted in the artworks. When looking at these portraits, the aspects that held greatest significance for me were the depictions of flesh and skin, and the manner in which they

had been rendered. In many of these honorific portraits a certain hubris can be detected within the poses and countenances of the portrayed, the rationale of these portraits being to distinguish the individual subject from their fellow man or woman; the evocation of a common human experience was, more often than not, a peripheral concern.

In reaction to the majority of portrait imagery, I resolved to create an image that reduced the presence of the individual within a facial image. In Close's work the amount of detail represented results in the significance of the individual being diminished the closer the viewer gets to the surface. As the viewer approaches the work their consideration shifts from engaging with the image as an evocation of an individual to an engagement with the surface details of that specific individual, details that are common to the human bodily surface in general.

I wanted to produce images that isolated the experience of looking at the details of skin from the individual in which they are situated. To create an experience akin to the scrutinisation of the surface conducted when looking the mirror, or when contemplating the features of a loved one. This rationale formed the basis for this research project, the conceptual, theoretical, philosophical and practical aspects of which are presented in this thesis.

Acknowledgements

My sincere thanks go to my supervisor Professor John Harvey for his continual patience, support, encouragement, advice and expertise through the practical and written elements of this Doctoral thesis. I would also like to thank my second supervisor Doctor Simon Pierce for his guidance and advice throughout this undertaking.

The artworks produced for this project would not have been possible without the knowledge and advice of Phil Garrett and Andrew Baldwin. Without their time, assistance and skill, many of my ideas would never have seen the light of day.

I would like to thank my father, John Roberts and my good friend, Jamie Copeland, for reading, analysing and constructively criticising many of the ideas that formed the basis of this thesis. I would also like to thank Dr Dawn Goldstone, who has always taken an interest in my work.

My thanks extends to all the sitters used in the artworks, thank you for posing for me and for allowing your facial parts to be depicted in such detail.

Many thanks to Josie McCoy, for allowing me to use her painting *Raimunda III*.

Last, but by no means least, I would like to show my appreciation for my wife Amanda for her continual love, support, care and advise. Without Amanda's help it would not have been possible to find the time to work on this project amid the demands of family and work life.

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Introduction

The overriding objective of this research project is to produce and analyse a series of highly detailed representations of the human face that facilitate a sustained analytical engagement with the human facial surface. These images are freed from individuating or social classifications in order to facilitate evocations of sensations and recollections of bodily experiences that are generated when scrutinising and engaging with the human face. This analytical engagement with the externality of the body involves a variety of visual experiences ranging from the perception of a gestalt whole to a myopic mode of examining the details of the surface. When elements of the human face are first encountered the entirety of the head is initially perceived as a unified object, as the face is subjected to further inspection the prominent elements become distinguished, the cheeks, eyes, nose or mouth can be centred upon and scrutinised in greater detail and this allows for an increased perception of the details within the features. With subsequent viewing smaller details becoming increasingly visible, different colours on the surface and subsurface of the skin become apparent and the greens, blues, and purples of the veins contrast with the yellows, pinks and browns of the upper layers. When the surface is subjected to a sustained, myopic, visual examination, the minute forms and colours of the surface, and subsurface, become delineated and identifiable, fine intersecting lines become apparent and colours shift, blur, separate or bleed into one another. As the eye moves even closer to the surface the limits of vision are reached, the surface appears to fragment into an almost crystalline substance and the eye struggles to clarify the minute points of light reflected off of the epidermis. The images produced for this project clarify the details at the limits of vision and amplify the minutia of the human subject in order to connect an individual human face with a broader humanity, and to the common animality inherent in the human condition.

This thesis uses a largely semiotic approach to identify and interpret the ways in which facial images have historically been used as communicative devices. This approach utilises the methods first introduced by Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) that explain how signs can function in three ways: as icons, providing a direct reference to the object it signifies; as an index, where content beyond the direct reference is inferred or suggested; or symbolically, where the

relationship between the signifier its referent is purely arbitrary and a shared knowledge is required for the sign to function.¹ Peirce's methods are useful in conducting a taxonomy of images, allowing specific communicative aspects of facial imagery to be analysed in terms of their communicative potential. Peirce's semiotics are also those used predominately in the works of the theorists Roland Barthes (1915-1980), Norman Bryson (b.1949), Giles Deleuze (1925-1995) and Felix Guttari (1930-1992) whose interpretations and analyses of two dimensional visual imagery is drawn upon to support a number of ascertains made in this thesis.

The Facial Image

The face occupies a position of significant importance in human identification, communication, and, with the voice, acts as a central means of determining a person's emotional state. The face plays a major role in how we visually encounter, recognise, respond to and connect with our fellow human beings. Face-like formations are the first objects in the world that we discern from the chaos of light and colour of undeveloped vision.² The gestalt perception of the head and facial regions are also the most immediate means of identifying ourselves and others. The centrality of the face in human interaction means that images of the human face are a valuable tool in providing a means to explore the appearance of the human subject and its significance in terms of personal enquiry and in the understanding others. The value of such representations is demonstrable through the long history of facial imaging, with the first extant facial image being discovered in a cave near Angoulême in western France, which is believed to have been created 27,000 years ago.³ It is for these reasons that the human face has been chosen as the basis of this

¹ Peirce, C.S. *The philosophy of Peirce : selected writings*, edited by Justus Buchler, (London : Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1940).

² It has been demonstrated that children as young as 9 minutes old prefer to look at schematic faces above scrambled images containing facial features: Goren, C.C, et al, "Visual following and pattern discrimination of face-like stimuli by newborn infants" *Pediatrics* 56, no.4 (October, 1975):544-9. This is confirmed in Johnson, M.H et al. "Newborns' preferential tracking of face-like stimuli and its subsequent decline tracking of face-like stimuli and its subsequent decline." *Cognition* 40, issues 1-2 (August 1991): 1-19 and Frank, M.C et al, "Development of infants' attention to faces during the first year." *Cognition* 110, issue 2 (February 2009): 160-170.

³. See: Jonathan Jones, "Old Masters" *The Guardian*, 6th June 2006, accessed January 2013.

<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2006/jun/06/art>.

research project, which seeks to explore the possibilities of using facial imaging as a catalyst to evoke a shared, corporeal experience of sustained human engagement.

Chapter One

The aim of this chapter is to examine the ways in which the capacity for the facial image to effectively function as a means to convey a shared experience is hindered by an association between the face and individuality. Expectations and ways of interpreting the human face have arisen from conventional imaging approaches that affect the way we interact with facial images. The majority of facial imaging, in the fine arts of Western Europe, has largely produced within the genre of portraiture, a genre in which the specifics of an individual and their situation are widely privileged above the universal aspects of the face.

Chapter one will provide an overview of the portrait genre, starting with a brief analysis of what the term portrait means and moving on to look at the genesis of the conventions and traditions of portrait that have helped frame the way in which facial images are interpreted and read. The way in which these conventions originated in the “early modern” period will be investigated and this chapter will show how visual designs, that had previously been used to depict figures of divinity or exemplary virtue, were adapted to ennoble and distinguish individuals in positions of power from their fellow human beings⁴. I will chart the progression of these conventions and survey the ways in which they have been adapted to suit the purposes of those in power.

A history of the portrait is given to inform an analysis of how expectations arise from the portrait genre that frame the way facial images are encountered. The ways in which portraits are interpreted institutes a compulsion to identify and personify depicted human subjects according to assumptions formed through an existing knowledge base within non-portrait facial images. This chapter will present a detailed account of how the impulse to identify the subject pervades

⁴ The early modern period is generally considered to be between the mid fifteenth century and the late eighteenth century.

into facial images that are specifically not portraits, through pseudo-scientific physiognomic processes.

An analysis of physiognomy outlines the dangers of facial interpretation, with historic uses of the facial image being presented to demonstrate how the facial image has been used as a tool for social classification and engineering. Physiognomic interpretations are based on a tenuous link between the image and the individual subject. The fragility of this bond will be highlighted as will the means in which critics and artists of the twentieth and twenty first centuries have questioned and problematized the traditional relationship between the portrait, likeness and the portrayal of individuality.

This chapter proceeds to demonstrate how expectations and traditions of the portrait genre, based on physiognomic principles, continue to form the basis for the majority of contemporary portrait production, despite the significant weight of criticism that has been directed at the conventions of portraiture. From these portrait and physiognomic enquires a list of factors that enable the communicative aspects of the facial image to act as signifiers of identity, personality and importance will be presented and the avoidance of these factors will form the basis for the conceptual framework for facial imaging, a framework that will be further developed in chapters two and three.

Chapter Two

Having established what factors affect the interpretation of facial imagery, in terms of identification and personification, this chapter will establish a design for facial imaging that avoids the individuating and socially classifying elements detailed in chapter one. The manner in which the face is perceived is assessed in order to ascertain how processes of identification function.

Having established how identity is formulated a composition format shall be described, a design that diminishes as many identifying socialising and honorific elements, commonly found within facial imagery; this design establishes a basis for the production of a series of facial images. To allow for a range of viewing experiences within a single image it was necessary for the compositional format to be filled with an abundance of detail. This chapter will show how an increased amount of visual detail within the representational images in general, serves to generate a sense of veracity, or credibility, within them. Through the incorporation of a large quantity of surface detail into the facial image this project aims to produce highly realistic images that will recall sensations experienced felt when scrutinizing another's facial surface and recall shared experiences of flesh and skin.

This chapter investigates the historical precedents for anonymous, generalized depictions of the human form in order to position the concepts underpinning the images within this field. Images of the human body in antiquity used idealised forms, guided by principles of harmony and balance, to transcend individuality and monumentalise the human body. A discussion of the debates surrounding notions of realism and idealism will be presented to show the difficulties inherent in uniting generalised ideal, or conceptual, form with the specifications and idiosyncrasies of the human body. The presentation of generalised, realistic images that are divorced from individuality has parallels with practices conducted within the field of medical illustration. This chapter will look at this genre of representational art. These historic approaches to bodily imaging are analysed in order to establish the best means of uniting the depiction of bodily details within a depersonalised, structured compositional format.

Chapter Three

The aim of chapter three demonstrates how photorealist painting methods can be hybridised with realist painterly processes to achieve a means of representing flesh and skin that limits the communicative elements within the images produced for this project. This project develops upon strategies employed by the practitioners of photorealist painting that disrupt traditional platonic conceptions of the image/object relationship. The ideas posited by the French philosophers Giles Deleuze and Felix Guttari will be presented to help explain how a disruption in the relationship

between the image and the original object can serve to inhibit the prescribed meaning, or signification, of an image and how the loss of a specific meaning has the potential to enhance the sensation generating potential of an image.

Within the conceptual framework of this project photorealist strategies work in synergy with European painterly traditions. Artists working within these traditions have utilized the materiality of paint to evoke the visual qualities of skin. The approaches employed by Francis Bacon (1909 – 1992), Lucian Freud (1922-2011) and Jenny Saville (b.1970) are described in terms of their abilities to evoke sensations and recall experiences within the viewer. To help explain the sensation generating effects present within the work produced by these artists, the philosophies of Giles Deleuze and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) will be presented. Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty both detail the way in which artworks can operate through a union of sight and touch and in doing so connect the viewer to the artist and evoke collective experiences and sensations of a shared existence. In incorporating realist painterly strategies into photorealistic modes of depiction this project aims to recall a myopic way of looking at flesh.

Chapter Four

Chapter four details how the conceptual framework underpinning the art practice was given form. This chapter will present each of the ten paintings produced for this project and show how they enact, develop and experiment with aims and objectives of the project. A full account of the materials, technologies, methods and process employed within each of the works will be presented. Where appropriate the historical precedents for the technical approaches will be outlined, in particular the way in which artists of the past have used paint to mimic the tactility of skin will be shown. Each of the facial studies presented in this chapter will be given its own concluding section outlining the strengths and weaknesses of each experiment in terms of implementing the conceptual framework and whether or not the image was successful in achieving the overall objective of this project, which is to create images that recall a fascination arising from a sustained involvement with the human facial surface.

Notes on methodology and format

This project details a personal involvement with the both subject matter and the means of production. Using the conventional address of “the researcher”, in reference to my actions was, therefore, deemed inappropriate to the topic, as it gives a false sense of detachment and objectivity. For these reasons “I” is predominately used when referring to my agency as a researcher and as a practitioner.

This thesis is presented in terms of a thematic structure, where each topic is dealt with in turn. It is for this reason that a separate literature review is not presented. Relevant texts are detailed within their relevant subject area, with footnotes providing full bibliographic details of the main source material and providing information on further reading around the topic. The thematic nature of this study also means that case studies of how specific artists have enacted and responded to the topics dealt with in this project are interwoven into the text dealing with specific subject areas.

Chapter One

Facial imaging and the portrait

Within the fine arts, facial imagery has largely been situated within the province of portraiture, a genre in which artists chiefly produce visualisations of identity and personality. In displaying aspects of identity and personality the portrait image generally relies on the natural capacity to recognise other human beings through the gestalt perception of the head and facial characteristics, where an object is perceived as a whole prior to the recognition of its constituent parts. The imaging of personality relies on physiognomic interpretations of the facial details, expressions, pose and the placement of external symbolic objects that utilise the power of suggestion in conjunction with an existing knowledge base comprising of social expectations of characters and roles.

This chapter will explore the portrait as a means of facial imaging and outline ways in which a synergy of identification and physiognomy has been utilised as an instrument of elite power. The elites have used the facile image to facilitate the dehumanisation, ostracisation and ultimately extermination of members of society persecuted by those in power. This analysis of portraiture will be presented in order to demonstrate how the artworks produced for this research project have deliberately removed, or obscured the identifying and physiognomic aspects of the portrait from the facial image, aspects that inhibit the primary function of this project, which is to produce generalised images of the human face.

1. Defining the portrait

An exact definition of portraiture is difficult to provide as it has become a term that applies to depictions of individuality, projections of personality, images of identity and representations of social or vocational roles. It is this mutability of the portrait that makes the art historian Andreas Beyer (b.1957) states: "it is a striking fact that there is no real theory of the portrait...such a theory

can only be pieced together from widely scattered positions and that even then it remains ephemeral.”⁵ Generally, the portrait can be defined as an artwork that deliberately alludes to a named individual.⁶ The face, head and shoulder regions are frequently given primacy in the majority of portrait works as they are the most instantaneous and cognitive means of identifying a portrayed subject.⁷ It is because of the face's primacy in identification processes that any definition of a portrait prior to the twentieth-century would have centred on the use of a facial likeness as a signifier of an individual.

The portrait has a dual aspect in that it oscillates between functioning as an object of aesthetic engagement and as an evocation of an individual's presence.⁸ The painted portrait is, primarily, a signification of an individual; while its formal arrangements - the composition, form, colours, tones and the materiality of the paint - become secondary, although not insignificant, aspects. The significance of the formal qualities of the portrait has led to depictions of individuals being used as means for experimentation with the formal qualities of the image. These explorations must maintain a signifying element, alluding to an individual. It is not necessary for the allusion to an individual to be enacted in likeness as subjects can be signified through other symbolic signs, written, or otherwise, that denote a specific individual. However, without a central signifier, or an accompanying caption, alluding to an individual an image cannot be classed as a portrait. Conversely, this sign need not refer to an actual existing, or formally-existing person, is it enough that the viewer believes, or assumes that the likeness of an individual, or other signifying elements, refer to a person.

⁵ Andreas Beyer, *Portraits: A History*, trans. Steven Lindberg (New York: H.N. Abrams, 2003), 15.

⁶ This definition is derived from definitions and explanations within: Beyer, *Portraits*; Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991); Catherine M. Soussloff, *The Subject in Art: Portraiture and the Birth of the Modern*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Shearer West, *Portraiture*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); and Joanna Woodall, *Portraiture: Facing the Subject*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997).

⁷ The face, head and shoulder format is also an artistic convention derived from the Roman tradition of the portrait bust, see: Mary Beard and John Henderson, *Classical Art: From Greece to Rome*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 207.

⁸ Brilliant, *Portraiture*, 7-8.

The centrality of the individual and the concentration on the face and head within the majority of portraiture generates expectations that inform the interpretation of facial images that are not intended to be portraits. A drive to identify and personify a subject through their external characteristics arises partly from the conception of portraiture as a practice of depicting identity and personality. This conception extends beyond portrait imagery and into the broader field of facial imaging through a process of “faciality.”

2. Faciality

This tendency to seek identity and imbue images with personality is described by Deleuze and Guattari as a process of faciality. Faciality is a concept originally posited by in the collaborative work *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1988), it is a signifying mechanism that "bores meaning into the black holes on the white wall of the face, enabling classification, knowledge and control."⁹ Faciality designates and defines a subject through their facial features; it explains a historically constituted Western obsession with attaching identity and personality to the face. This attachment creates an expectation, which dictates a viewer's reception of a facial image: "the face crystallises all redundancies; it emits and receives releases and recaptures signifying signs."¹⁰ The tendency to personify the facial image demonstrates that any image of a human subject that includes the facial region has a capacity to be interpreted as a portrait.

3. Portraits of the powerful

The conventions surrounding the portrait image not only imbue facial images with expectations of identity and personality, there is also an expectation that a portrait should denote a powerful or noteworthy subject. This expectation arises from the portrait's traditional and predominant use as a means to depict and disseminate images of those in power, or subjects deemed suitable

⁹ Maria Loh, "Renaissance Faciality" *Oxford Art Journal* 32, Issue 3 (2009): 345.

¹⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Massumi Brian (London: Continuum, 2011), 115.

for portrayal by the commissioning party, which is commonly a wealthy patron or a member of the social elite.

The elite have utilised images of themselves to differentiate themselves from their fellow man and to highlight and propagate their importance. Images commemorating the powerful deceased have been found in the pyramids of Ancient Egypt (circa 2000BC).¹¹ Portraits have commonly been used to disseminate images of living sovereigns in sculptures, paintings and coinage; such depictions were widespread throughout Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire. However, the conventions and traditions that frame contemporary expectations of facial imagery arise from practices originating in the early modern period.

4. The origins of the modern portrait

The traditions and conventions inherent within the modern portrait, which rely on physiognomic interpretations, arise from formulaic models of representation established during the Renaissance. Iconic schemata, readily identifiable formats, or designs, that had previously been used to depict deities, mythological characters, saints and other divine subjects were appropriated by wealthy and powerful patrons to legitimise, naturalise and propagate their social positions. In the mid-fourteenth century, a distinct rise in images of named individuals began to appear within images of religious scenes and, as the century progressed, these individuals started to gain greater visual supremacy within biblical images, and eventually became the central subject matter in a large number of works.

The icons produced within the Byzantium Empire carried forward representation devices and compositions from antique portraiture and informed the vast majority of two-dimensional art

¹¹ Jonathan Jones, "Jonathan Jones on Art: Blog" *The Guardian*. 9 February 2011, first accessed, June 2013.
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2011/feb/09/egypt-portrait-seneb-family>

production following the Triumph of Orthodoxy in 842 AD, until the mid-fourteenth century.¹² These icons were largely produced for pedagogical and decorative purposes and within these artworks the human form was constituted within biblical narratives. A hierarchy of depiction existed, figures of exemplary virtue, such as Jesus Christ or the saints, were given greater dominance than their earthly counterparts and were presented within a conventional and easily recognisable design.¹³ The Christ Pantocrator [Figs.1-2] is one such iconic design that presents the viewer with a direct frontal image of Christ, cropped just above the waist, in which the face features predominantly. This design was reproduced throughout the Byzantium Empire and influenced art production in Western Europe where a full body formulaic image, known as the Christ in Majesty icon [Fig.3], was utilised.¹⁴

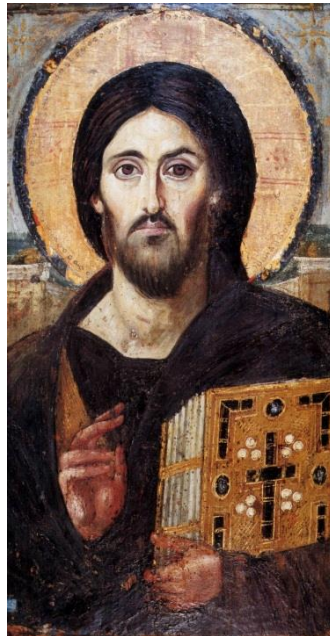


Fig.1. Anon. *Christ Pantocrator* – mid 6th Century.
Encaustic painting on Wood. 84 x 45.5 cm

¹² See: Thomas F. Mathews, *The Art of Byzantium: Between Antiquity and the Renaissance* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1998), 43.

¹³ The typology of medieval art comes from the necessity of the images to convey the meanings of the scenes depicted quickly and directly to the, frequently, illiterate viewer. A form of visual literacy was essential in order for the viewer to easily identify the principle characters within an image, this meant that biblical figures had to be presented within a strict schemata that allowed little room for deviation or elaboration (See Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1985).

¹⁴ These images were based frequently based on acheiropoieta icons, meaning images that were "made without hands", which, legend has it, were icons miraculously imprinted on surfaces by the physical body of Christ. See: Rowan Williams, *The Dwelling of the Light: Praying with the Icons of Christ*. (Norwich: The Canterbury Press, 2003), 67.

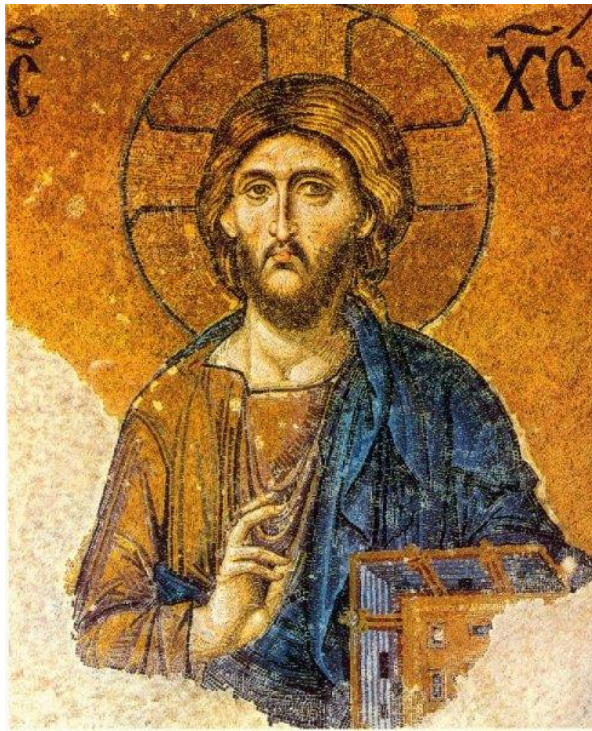


Fig.2. Anon. Christ Pantocrator – 13th Century. Detail of a mosaic icon of the Deisis.



Fig.3. Anon. Christ in Majesty 12th century



Fig.4. Simone Martini, *Saint Louis of Toulouse*, c.1317. Tempera on wood, 200 x 188 cm

This visual hierarchy of the icon is evident in Simone Martini's *Saint Louis of Toulouse* (c.1317) [Fig.4], which is also one of the first paintings to prominently depict the individualised features of a ruler within a painting.¹⁵ In this piece Robert of Anjou is depicted as being crowned by Saint Louis.¹⁶ The visual hierarchy is clear: Saint Louis dominates the picture, being over one and a half times the size of Robert. The painting displays the individualised features of the mortal Robert whereas the depiction of Saint Louis is generalised and idealised depiction, which is virtually identical to other depictions of saints produced by Martini; this lack of individualisation signifies the Saint's otherworldliness distinct from Robert's earthly features. Within donor portraits such as this it was the convention for the divine to be present in order to legitimize the portrayal of the commissioning party. Here, the crowning of the king by the saint alludes to notions of divine power being bestowed upon an individual and the biological relationship connecting the two protagonists serves to amplify this conceit. This image is one of the first examples depicting the ideological and hierarchical apparatus of elite power, present within the visualisation of succession, of divine power inherent in the blood.

Artworks produced during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries show a distinct increase in the individualisation of images of donors as wealthy and powerful commissioning parties desired a greater recognition within their representations and an elevation within the hierarchy of the image. By 1360 portraits of individuals were being produced that entirely dispensed with the religious narrative context that had legitimised them. Andreas Beyer terms these images “autonomous portraits” as they function solely as portrayals of named individuals divorced from any narrative context.¹⁷

Early Modern autonomous portraits appropriated iconic designs that had previously been used to depict exemplars of virtue or power, such as Jesus Christ or the saints, from the previous era

¹⁵ Beyer, *Portraits*, 24

¹⁶ It is likely that the painting was commissioned by Robert to commemorate the canonisation of his elder brother Louis who had renounced the throne in order to join the Franciscan order and later became the Bishop of Toulouse. See: Beyer, *Portraits*, P25

¹⁷ Beyer, *Portraits*, P26

in order to naturalise the positions of those in power.¹⁸ By placing their individual likenesses within traditional idealising formats the depicted wealthy and powerful projected a "socio-spiritual authority."¹⁹ The display of elites as figures of reverence normalised their positions of power and, by posturing in this way, the elites created a "visual genealogy" that served to raise them above their fellow man and imply a divine status.²⁰

5. Increased naturalistic tendencies within the icon

Norman Bryson applies a semiotic analysis of two 14th century images, to help explain the rise of detailed visual information within the schema of the icon that occurred during the fourteenth century.²¹ This analysis relies upon three orders of the sign: the denotational, connotational and the symbolic. Denotational signs rely on an indexical relation to the object depicted: it is a direct reference, the signifier points directly to its signified. Connotational aspects of the sign imply an ideological or mythological construction attached to the content. The symbolic sign is one that bears no actual relation to the object and its reference is purely arbitrary and constructed. Bryson suggests that that "The 'effect of the real' consists in a specialised relationship between denotation and connotation where connotation so confirms and substantiates denotation that the latter appears to rise to a level of truth."²² In terms of the portrait, an increase in detailed or peripheral information adds credence to the idealised formulaic subject, so that "By silently assimilating the real to the ideal, naturalistic portraiture enabled a human being to personify the majesty of the kingdom or courage of a military leader."²³

¹⁸ Williams, *The Dwelling of the Light: Praying with the Icons of Christ*, 67

¹⁹ Woodall, *Portraiture*, 2

²⁰ The phrase "visual genealogy" comes from: Woodall, *Portraiture*, 3

²¹ Derived from Roland Barthes use of semiotics in: Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Heath, Stephen (London : Fontana, 1977).

²² Bryson, *Vision and Painting*, 56-66

²³ Woodall, *Portraiture*, 3

6. The Bourgeois Portrait

In a similar way to the old ruling order of aristocracy, the bourgeois elites of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries adapted iconographic schemata in order to naturalise and reinforce their positions as non-hereditary elites. In affirming their power the moneyed elites appropriated forms of exemplary imagery pertaining to their self-image in order to distance themselves from images of the aristocracy. The elites of the sixteenth century- who gained power largely through global exploration, increased trade with the east and the Atlantic slave trade - used the portrait to image themselves and their increasingly important social and cultural roles. For the bourgeois, social and cultural significance had not come through their bloodlines but through their professions or vocations and it was this conception of identity they wished to visualise [Fig.5].



Fig.5. William Hogarth, *James Quin, Actor*, c.1739. Oil on canvas, 76 x 62.2 cm

An important aspect underlying bourgeois portraiture is the concept of dualism: the notion that the human condition exists in a dichotomised state where the functions and products of the mind are privileged over the physical labour of the body.²⁴ The separation of the mental from the physical served to distance the new moneyed elites from the old hereditary elites in demonstrating that their power had emanated from their own agency rather than from an inheritance. Dualism also served to distance the bourgeois from the working classes through the opposition of mental work to the physical labour of the proletariat.

In the eighteenth century the advent of National Portrait Galleries served to bolster the portrait's status as a tool for the underwriting elite power, it reinforced the link between portrayal and power and propagated the portrait as a means of ideological transmission. The founding principles of the National Portrait Gallery (NPG) in London were to present images of the great men that had been instrumental in building the nation; they were also functioned as a collective expression of common national ideals. Founded in 1856 the NPG was, in part, a reaction to advances in the printing press, which had facilitated the widespread dissemination of text and images. In reacting to the new ubiquity of printed material the NPG was a means to display an "officially sanctioned celebrity and significance"²⁵ and these sanctioned celebrities were to fulfil the exemplary roles that the lives of saints projected when society had formally been unified by Christian belief. In 1853 Thomas Carlyle wrote a proposition for a NPG that would be a "Pantheon, or home of all the National Divinities, for these our Historical Heroes are."²⁶ Carlyle's intentions in establishing the NPG were to humanise an increasingly mechanised industrial society by displaying those individuals instrumental in that society's development. Carlyle's aim was to utilise portraiture for the edification of society and to give a sense of communal, national, identity and pride in a society where individuality was seen as an increasingly fractured concept.²⁷ The visual exemplars of national greatness chosen for display were selected by those in power and, therefore, represented a narrow historical viewpoint centred on great men performing

²⁴ For a concise definition of Cartesian dualisms see: Georges Dickers, *Descartes: An Analytical and Historical Introduction*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 69-72.

²⁵ Woodall, *Portraiture*, 220-1.

²⁶ Richard Cooper and John Ormonde, *Thomas Carlyle, 1795-1881* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 1981), 24.

²⁷ John Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1986.).

great acts. They ignored the structural shifts that occurred within society as a whole, which could be attributed to a great many people outside of the elite.²⁸

In appropriating the portrait schema to project their ideologies the bourgeois elites continued to use a form of visual genealogy to naturalise their positions of power. Visual precedents that had previously been used to depict exemplary scholars, philosophers and soldiers were adapted to incorporate the new honorific elite of scientists, engineers and explorers-the evocation of the past serving to place the bourgeois elite in a natural order of depicted greatness. In the perpetuation and adaptation of ennobling frameworks the bourgeoisie reinforced the notion the portrayal was the reserve of the elite and further entrenched the conventions and expectations of the portrait genre.

7. Portraits of non-elite subjects

The hierarchical structures present within the modern portrait persist when the portrayed subject is not a member of the ruling elite. The nature of the hand crafted object- as a cultural product of significant worth, born of time, effort and skill - works in conjunction with the iconic schemata in signalling out an individual as being worthy of display, a special subject distinguished from other human beings.

Prior to the photograph a preserved likeness of an individual had to be produced by hand. This was a prohibitively expensive, laborious and skilled exercise involving commissioning an artist proficient in naturalistic depiction and, ideally, able to produce a creative and aesthetically pleasing likeness of the sitter. Before industrialised processes of paint production led an increase in the availability and affordability of synthetic pigments, paints produced from exotic and rare materials, such as lapis lazuli or Chinese vermilion, were very expensive and this significantly affected a the cost of a portrait commission.²⁹ The expense involved in commissioning a portrait

²⁸ See: Hooper-Greenhil, E, *Museums and the interpretation of visual culture* (London; New York : Routledge, 2000).

²⁹ See: John Gage, *Colour in Art* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2006), 111.

meant that the preservation of likeness was only available to the wealthy, and they, therefore, dictated who was worthy of portrayal and the manner in which their chosen subjects would be depicted.



Fig.6. Diego Velázquez, *Portrait of Juan Calabazas (Calabacillas)*, 1637-39. Oil on canvas, 106.5 cm × 82.5 cm

Commissioned portraits of servants or other members of the lower orders were, therefore, at the behest of those in power. These works do not function as images of power or displays of virtue; instead, the portrayed subject is depicted within a framework relative to the normative image of the elite. An example of this is Diego Velázquez's (1599-1660) *Portrait of Juan Calabazas* (also known as *Calabacillas*) [n.d.] [Fig.6], King Phillip IV of Spain's court dwarf. In this image Calabacillas is not presented in an idealised or grandiose manner. The portrait schema is adapted to diminish rather than ennoble the portrayed; he sits cross-legged on a low seat, looking up at the viewer. He smiles with an almost gurning grin, distinct from the conventional stoic facial expression usually adopted for portrait images. Velázquez also displays Calabacillas's eyes as squinted, an affliction that would have normally been removed within the idealising conventions of court portraiture. It is impossible to know how this portrait would have been received, as dwarfs were considered part of the seventeenth -century Spanish "court-family" it is possible

that this image could have been looked upon with either affection or derision.³⁰ What is clear is that the manner of representation is significantly different from the ennobling conventions used to depict the elite, and in deviating from the normative representation mode the otherness of the sitter is highlighted. To a certain extent Calabacillas is objectified in this portrait and his condition as dwarf, as awkward, comic, lowly and different become the principle subject matter.

Portraits of servants produced during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries can be seen as statements of ownership on the part of the commissioning parties that help to normalise the positions of those in power.³¹ They frequently display the subject in their working environment, enacting their physical labour, which signifies their position relative to the commissioning party. As mentioned earlier, dualist notions privileged intellectual work over physical labour. By depicting subjects in their role as labourers the bourgeoisie provide an inverse image to their mental work, which served to visualise and normalise the bourgeoisie's conception of the world and their place in it

8. The Tronie

Seventeenth century Dutch painters working in the tradition of the tronie depicted unidentified subjects within the portrait format. In presenting anonymous individuals the artists producing these works mimicked the conventions of portraiture, while being freed from the social expectations and decorum that the formally commissioned portrait demanded; this freedom allowed artists to experiment with their subject matter while displaying their illusorily and creative skills.³² In these works, the subject of the painting shifts from the individual depicted to other qualities that they exhibit. Emotions, pathos, exaggerated theatrical gestures and clothing are all subject areas which tronie paintings investigate. Tronie painting echoes a theme present in Dutch genre painting of the same period that subtly inverted the formal dictates of portrait

³⁰ West, *Portraiture*, 97-99.

³¹ West, *Portraiture*, 99-100

³² For a detailed analysis of the tronie see Dickey, S and Roodenburg, H (eds.), *The Passions in the Arts: The Early Modern Netherlands*. (Zwolle: Waanders, 2010) and Hirschfelder, Dagmar. *Tronie und Porträt in der niederländischen Malerei des 17. Jahrhunderts*. (Berlin: Gebrüder Mann Verlag, 2008).

conventions by picturing scenes of merriment or placing symbolic objects around protagonists that subtly subvert or sexualise the individuals depicted and the expectations of formal depiction.³³

The tronie is now a defunct genre as contemporary, anonymous facial images exploring themes beyond the sitter are now firmly classified within the portrait genre, as is demonstrated by Wim Heldens winning the BP portrait award with his anonymous portrait *Distracted* in 2011 [Fig.19]. The tronie is easily read as a portrait as the element of likeness, derived from the sitter, has the capacity to act as an iconic signifier of a depicted individual.

The fact that tronies are frequently read as portraits is indicative of the broad impulse to interpret facial images as portraits, even where there are no captions or labels indicating the identity of the depicted subject. Johannes Vermeer's (1632-1675) *The Girl with a Pearl Earring* (c. 1665) [Fig.7] is a famously anonymous work of art, yet it is frequently seen, or interpreted as, a portrait. The work is likely to be a tronie; Vermeer produced a number of studies similar to the *Girl with a Pearl Earring* that were anonymous subjects exploring subjects other than the identity of the sitter. However, despite the likelihood that the image was not intended to be an identifiable portrait it has inspired speculation over the identity of the sitter.

³³ Smith, David R. "Irony and Civility: Notes on the Convergence of Genre and Portraiture in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting." *The Art Bulletin* 69, no.3 (September, 1987): 407-430.



Fig.7. Jan Vermeer, *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, c. 1665-1667. Oil on canvas, 44 cm x 39 cm

Speculations regarding the identity of sitter rely heavily on physiognomic interpretations based upon the limited information provided by Vermeer within the painting. The popularity of the film based on the bestselling novel *The Girl with the Pearl Earring*³⁴ by the historical novelist Tracy Chevalier (b. 1962), demonstrates a persistent desire to identify the subject of Vermeer's painting and this attests to the power of the physiognomic impulse to imbue facial images with a personality. There exists a tendency to force facial images into a portrait reception, "to squeeze life from art."³⁵ This impetus is born of a common understanding and expectation that images of this type are produced to represent individuals; the facial image becomes interpreted as a sign that is expected to denote a specific subject.³⁶

9. The intimate portrait

In instances where the friends or family of the artist, or the commissioning party, are portrayed the elevation of the subject is at the decree of the instigator and this act of selection ennobles the subject, the commissioning party and the artist. The art critic John Berger (b.1926) asserts that in "intimate" portraits of friends:

the social role of the sitter is reduced to *that of being painted*. The implied social value is either that of personal friendship (proximity) or that of being seen in such a way (being "treated") by an original artist...the sitter, somewhat like a still life, becomes subservient to the painter. Finally it is not his personality or role which impress but the artists vision.³⁷

Intimate portraits of this friends and family still work within the honorific portrait tradition and continue to propagate the notion that the selected subject is distinguished from the rest of humanity, worthy of being made in to an artwork, displayed within a venerated cultural artefact. Intimate portraits also continue to propagate physiognomic principles based upon the assumption that internal qualities or characteristics of an individual are discernible through their external appearance.

³⁴ Tracy Chevalier, *The Girl with the Pearl Earring*. (New York: Dutton, 1999).

³⁵ Beard, *Classical Art: from Greece to Rome*, 206.

³⁶ The impulse to identify and imbue images with personality traits is observed by Brilliant, *Portraiture*, 25.

³⁷ John Berger and Nikos Stangos ed., *The Look of Things* (New York: The Viking Press, 1975), 39.

10. Physiognomy

Developments during the nineteenth and twentieth led to negative ideological images being used to categorise and debase entire sections of society. In the late eighteenth century there was a renewed interest in the antiquated and discredited pseudo-science of physiognomy.³⁸ The central conceit underlying physiognomic practice being that a person's inner characteristics: their intellect, their morality, their disposition are all ascertainable through studying their facial characteristics. Whereas, in the idealising, honorific portrait image exemplary models were adapted to incorporate individual features, under physiognomic principles individual features were adapted and codified to denote tropes of human behaviour.

The foremost pioneer of physiognomy was the Swiss pastor and moralist Johann Kaspar Lavater's (1741-1891), whose work had a large influence on the scientific and philosophical communities of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.³⁹ Lavater's work centred on a classical ideal scale, based on the supposedly perfect proportions of the facial features, to which the brow, nose and chin of an individual could be compared and their personality measured. In this process Lavater built upon dualist notions in affirming that certain facial features - such as a large cranium - denoted intellect, while prominent mechanical aspects of the face - such as the mouth and jaw - implied an animality and immorality in the subject.

Lavater observed the truism that it is a compulsion to make assumptions about a person's inner qualities based of their external appearance, and proceed to make judgements founded on these assumptions.⁴⁰ The concept of faciality can be used to expand upon Lavater's observations

³⁸ During the Middle Ages physiognomy had been largely practised by charlatans, which resulted in the practice being outlawed by Henry VIII in 1521. Leonardo Da Vinci was highly critical of the practice, regarding it as having no scientific foundation

³⁹ Lavater, J. C, *Essays on Physiognomy Designed to Promote the Knowledge and the Love of Mankind*, trans. Henry Hunter and Thomas Holloway, (London: printed for John Murray; H. Hunter, D.D. and T. Holloway, 1792).

⁴⁰ Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy*, vol.1 of 3, 50-51

regarding the natural human instinct to interpret and categorise faces. In subjectifying and subjugating the individual, based on their external facial characteristics, the facialising machine creates a superficial account of a subject based upon their visual proximity to the beholder. A person of a similar race to an observer will be accredited with similar inner characteristics to that observer while those with perceivable differences (be it racial difference or otherwise) will have certain negative characteristics, based on a prejudicial knowledge base, attributed to them. It is a mechanism that functions within Western culture's obsessive concern with the face as signifier of social and moral standing and aids an illusion of individual subjectivity.⁴¹

Lavater's analytic approach does bear some conceptual similarities with the approaches I have in facial imaging for this research project, albeit for an entirely different ends. Lavater's specifically favoured the silhouetted profile portrait to conduct his facial assessments. He favoured this method of depiction as it removed any temporal signs of age or illness as well as any mobile or expressive qualities from the facial images he used - qualities that may have interfered with Lavater's analytical process. Likewise, the images produced for this research project avoid any expressive or suggestive facial projection (although the aspects of the temporal remain). Both approaches seek a purity of facial imaging although for entirely different purposes. Lavater's work sought to find a natural language of physiognomy in order to visually quantify personality. For Lavater, personality was an innate and unchanging aspect of an individual, an essential aspect of a being that was externally visible. My art production seeks to remove the possibilities of meaning and interpretation, to entirely deflect the physiognomic response to facial imagery, to deny the faciality machine in order to create, what Deleuzue and Guttari term: "deteritorialised" faces. Lavater sought a purity of the facial imaging that would result in the truth behind the face being laid bare; my work reveals that no such truth exists.

The renewed interest in physiognomy concurred with the invention of photography, which took place between 1790 and 1839. The photograph allowed for images to be produced quickly and at a lesser cost than had previously been possible. This, in turn, led to vast increase in production and availability of images. The photograph was instrumental in dismantling the painted portrait's

⁴¹ West. *Portraiture*. 17

claim to authentic likeness and revealing that the classical notion of the idealised face, on which the majority of traditional portraiture was based, was a falsity. Whereas Lavater's work had sought to codify external appearances for benign purposes, the photograph was to be utilised as a physiognomic tool for the purposes of social classification and division where "zones of deviance and respectability could be clearly demarcated."⁴² The pioneer of eugenics as a social program, Francis Galton (1822-1911), extensively used photographic facial composites in an attempt isolate any shared facial characteristics indicative of personality types, this included composites of convicted criminals.

An extreme and malign consequence of categorising members of society can be seen in the racial cataloguing that occurred during the 1930s and continued into World War II. The systematic defining and ordering of racial types utilised physiognomic principles to attribute certain qualities to certain races. This process was a perversion of Lavater's essentialist notions that led to the dehumanisation of large numbers of people, a system of differentiation that facilitated and justified the mass extermination of members of society at the behest of those in power.⁴³ Under the dualist notion of self the subject (identity) resides in the mind while the body is merely a vessel, an object. The use of the full face categorical facial image, the "mug shot" as a means of identification pays no heed to the subject - unlike portraiture the mug shot does not strive to represent the subject's inner self nor their position in society. Instead, mug shots objectify the sitter and achieve identification through purely physical means without any reference to the privileged subject. The photograph aids objectification through the distancing of the artist and the subject. Whereas before photography an artist would have had to spend a considerable amount of time in the presence of the person they were resenting, with mass photography a photographer only needs to see the photographed for a matter of seconds, the artist, the image and the viewer are therefore disconnected from the person being represented. This objectification denies the portrayed the position of subject and allows them to be readily seen

⁴² Sekula, Allan. "The Body and the Archive" *October* 39 (Winter, 1986): 3-64

⁴³ for a detailed exploration of the events and theories that led from Lavater's idealism to the holocaust see: Gray, Richard T. *About Face: German Physiognomic Thought from Lavater to Auschwitz*. (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2004).

as an "other." This otherness dehumanises the portrayed and this facilitates the violence inflicted upon them:

Actual violence against women, homosexuals, blacks, Jews, the "disabled" depends upon the exclusion of these groups from the honoured realm of the subject, together with the elision of image and reality upon which portraiture depends...The Jewish holocaust and "ethnic cleansing" become in this perversion a kind of appalling, displaced iconoclasm.⁴⁴

Harry Berger Jr. argues that much of art history's interpretation of portrait imagery relies on physiognomic principles. Berger asserts that art historians frequently gain insights into a sitter's identity through the pose and adornments visible within an image, whereas, in physiognomy the face projects the subject's intellectual or moral worth the art historian sees in a painting the subject's vocation, history and character: their "archival data" as Berger puts it.⁴⁵ This assertion can be seen to be true of the majority of portrait interpretation and any portrait deemed insightful, in terms of representing the depicted subject's inner characteristics, must rely on physiognomic principles - principles that have been completely discredited and the sinister implications of which have been lambasted.

The section above details the potential dangers of a physiognomic approach to facial imaging. The abhorrent consequences of which, together with its pseudoscientific and assumption based foundations, demonstrate the necessity for this approach to be avoided. The conceptual framework underpinning the facial images produced for this research project strives to remove as many potentially codifying elements from the facial image as possible.⁴⁶ In removing these

⁴⁴ Woodall, *Portraiture*, 14

⁴⁵ Berger, Harry. *Fictions of the Pose: Rembrandt against the Italian Renaissance*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 108

⁴⁶ How this is achieved will be dealt with in the subsequent chapter outlining the conceptual design of the images.

aspects this project seeks a means to disrupt the tendency to interpret and judge people by their external attributes.

11. Twentieth-century criticisms of the portrait

During twentieth century a vast amount of literature surrounding the functions of the facial image has been produced. The excesses of facial categorisation, the debasement of physiognomic analysis, the mass production and the commercialisation of the image; as well as the implicit impact of social, biological, psychological and cultural studies have all contributed to the critical analysis of facial imagery.

Technological advancements in the mid to late twentieth century have enabled advertising, commerce and the cult of celebrity to lead the portrait further from the fine art sphere and away from the depiction of exemplars of virtue: instead the portrait has entered the public domain.⁴⁷

[The] historical subjectivity within bourgeois conception was measured - however problematically - by an individual's achievements in the public interest, by service to the common cause if social and political progress and cultural and scientific enlightenment, spectacular subjectivity in late-capitalist consumer society is measured according to the degree of acquired visibility and public exposure.⁴⁸

The advertising industry uses the familiarity of a celebrity's image to sell commodities through the repetition and mass dissemination of imagery. The individuals displayed are no longer exemplars of divine or social virtue and instead have become models of masculinity, femininity,

⁴⁷ Specifically the wide spread availability of televisions, large scale printed advertising images and the mass distribution of images through magazines and the Internet.

⁴⁸ Buchloh, B.H.D. "Residual Resemblance" in Feldman, Melissa E., and Buchloh B. H. D. *Face-off: The Portrait in Recent Art*. (Philadelphia, PA: Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, 1994), 62

wealth, taste, success and power. Similarly to the conventions of the traditional portraits - that assimilate the real to the ideal - these portraits create a false reality of an ideal circumstance attainable through the consumption of mass-produced commodities.

The art world's response to the mass-production and mass-dissemination of the celebrity image can be seen in the work of the Pop Artists of the 1960s and 70s. For example, in *Marilyn Diptych* (1962) [Fig.8] Andy Warhol (1928-1987) uses a mass media representation of the famous actress to comment on the ubiquity of the celebrity images. Warhol's portrait highlights the superficiality in both the portrayal and the viewer's conception of the depicted celebrity. His portraits display minimal physiognomic features using simplistic lines, forms and colours; despite the lack of visual information the subject is readily identifiable. Warhol's repetition of Marilyn's image serves to reduce the subject's individuality.⁴⁹ The simplicity of depiction mirrors the viewer's own simplistic concept of that celebrity's personality based on an equally simplistic mediated presentation of that person. In showing the prevalence and emptiness of the mass-produced image Warhol's portraiture highlights the facile and mediated nature of portraying identity in general.

⁴⁹ West, *Portraiture*, 96-97.

Fig.8. Andy Warhol, *Marilyn Diptych*, 1962. Acrylic paint on canvas, support (each): 205.4 x 144.8 x 2 cm
<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/warhol-marilyn-diptych-t03093>

12. Fragmented Identities

In the twenty first century the mass-dissemination of facial imagery, formally reserved for celebrities has broadened. Social networking websites have facilitated a democratisation and mass distribution of represented identity, to the extent that anyone with a camera and access to the internet is capable of producing and publishing portraits of themselves, or others, globally. These images are frequently updated: new poses and guises are put on display and these acts of self-portrayal speak of the fragmentation of identity within twenty first century western society.

The presentation of multiple identities involves the projection and adaptation of behavioural masks that are created by social and cultural expectations, as Ernst Gombrich (1909-2001) observes: "We model ourselves so much in the expectations of others that we assume the mask...and we grow into our type until it moulds all our behaviour, down to our gait and facial expression."⁵⁰ Deleuze and Guttari demonstrate that the social masks used in contemporary society are far removed from those used in "primitive" cultures, which serve to connect humanity with animal kind. In contrast the masks of Western society act as superficial displays of identity that serves to distance the face from the body, from humanities' innate animality.⁵¹ This distancing serves to aid the mechanisms of faciality in defining and judging others according to our own expectations of enacted social and cultural roles. Gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity are performative social roles that are generated, enacted and interpreted through human interaction. A cyclical pattern exists where social expectations formulate concepts of identity that are then constructed in self-identities, these constructs reaffirm expectations of behaviour, which in turn reinforce and normalise social masks.

⁵⁰ E. H. Gombrich. *The Image and the Eye: Further Studies in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*. (London: Phaidon, 1994), 111

⁵¹ Deleuze and Guttari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 167-191.

13. The difficulty of depicting identity

The failings of the portrait's capacity to portray an individual are further problematised by the fragile basis on which identity rests. The concept of individual identity has been thoroughly investigated throughout the twentieth century and continues to generate contemporary research.⁵² Theoretical contributions from a number of disciplines have problematised the notion of a fixed, discernible identity. For example, Karl Marx's (1818-1883) theories highlight economic effects on the social subject rather than the individual, while Sigmund Freud's (1866-1939) concept of the unconscious self makes defining individual agency problematic.

The traditional semiotic links between the portrait sign and the original referent have also been questioned in the twentieth century. Marcel Duchamp's (1887-1968) *Wanted, \$2000 Reward* (1923) [Fig.9] demonstrates the fragility of link between the two-dimensional image and the identity of the subject it refers to. In this image Duchamp utilises a ready-made placard into which he inserted his own image and added the name of his transvestite alter ego Rose Selavy. This act of appropriation highlights the arbitrary nature of the connection between the image and its referent and comments on "the imprecision of the self's boundaries, on the potential, if not actual, interchangeability of human being by category, and on the ultimate submergence of the self under the weight of labels."⁵³

The fragmented and mutable aspects of identity call into question the value of the two dimensional static image in portraying anything other a highly simplified aspect of a subject. These issues have been articulated by the art critic Benjamin H.D. Buchloh (b.1941). Buchloh demonstrates how Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) dismantled the conventions of portraiture after struggling to capture an adequate likeness of the modernist author Gertrude Stein (1874-1946)

⁵² The fragmentation and resulting uncertainty surrounding notions of identity has been thoroughly investigated within the field of sociology, for an overview of this research see: Bendle, M.F. "The Crisis of 'identity' in High Modernity." *The British Journal of Sociology* 53, issue 1 (March 2002):1-18.

⁵³ Brilliant, *Portraiture*. 174.

[Fig.10], a painting in which Picasso substituted features from an Iberian mask in place of sitter's facial characteristics.

Fig.9. Marcel Duchamp, *Wanted, \$2000 Reward*, 1926. Altered "Wanted" poster rectified readymade, 49.5 x 35.5 cm

<http://www.moma.org/collection/works/8036?locale=en>

Fig.10. Pablo Picasso, *Portrait of Gertrude Stein*, 1906. Oil on canvas, 100 x 81.3 cm

<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/47.106/>

Fig.11. Pablo Picasso, *Portrait of Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler*, 1910. Oil on canvas,
100.5 cm x 73 cm

<http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/111060>

Fig.12. Pablo Picasso, *Portrait of Ambroise Vollard* 1910. Oil on canvas, 92 x 65 cm

<https://www.artsy.net/artwork/pablo-picasso-portrait-of-art-dealer-ambroise-vollard-1867-1939>

Fig.13. Pablo Picasso, *Portrait of Wilhelm Uhde*, 1910. Oil on canvas, 81 x 60 cm

<http://www.artchive.com/artchive/P/picasso/uhde.jpg.html>

After struggling to capture an adequate likeness of Stein, Picasso went further by abstracting the features of his subjects and in doing so revealed the superficiality of the portrait image. In his representations of the art dealers Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler (1884-1979) [Fig.11] and Ambroise Vollard (1866-1939) [Fig.12], and of the poet Wilhelm Uhde (1874-1947) [Fig.13], Picasso presents visually fractured re-evaluations of the portrait genre. These paintings disassemble mimetic representation through the fragmentation of form and the resulting union of painterly surface and illusory pictorial space. However, traces of physiognomic resemblance remain discernible within them, for example in Vollard's authoritative air or in Kahnweiler's gentle smile. Buchloh asserts that these: "remnants of characteristic subjectivity still appear...if only in a passing gesture that seems to acknowledge that the disappearing conventions of mimetic production are now, at best, embodied in the features of caricature". Caricature and the mask rely on fixed physiognomic applications, with reference to a pre-existing model of expression or personality. The portrait can only present a simplification of a performed role and, as John Berger makes clear: "[w]e can no longer accept that the identity of a man can be adequately established by preserving and fixing what he looks like from a single viewpoint in one place."⁵⁴ To attempt to portray identity within a static two-dimensional facial image is problematic.

⁵⁴ Berger, John, "The Changing View of Man in the Portrait", *The Look of Things*. (The Viking Press, New York. 1974), 40.

14. The contemporary portrait

Conceptual experimentation within the portrait genre has demonstrated that the depiction of visual likeness is no longer a necessary aspect of the portrait. This is demonstrated in the artworks *Sir John Edward Sulston*⁵⁵ (2001) by Marc Quinn (b.1964) [Fig.14] and *Self Portrait (Times New Roman)* (2012) by Mark Wallinger (b.1959) [Fig.15]; neither of these works has a direct visual link to the portrayed subject's appearance. The signifying aspect of Quinn's work, the allusion to an individual, resides in the required knowledge that Sulston's DNA provides a genetic blueprint of his innate, hereditary qualities, including his appearance. Wallinger's work relies on knowledge of the letter and word "I" as a sign that signifies the self. These two works highlight the semiotic aspects of the portrait and demonstrate it is necessary for knowledge external to the subject to be engaged for the portrait sign to function.

The projection of identity is another area of the portrait that has been conceptually separated from the conventional adherence to likeness that has traditionally dominated the portrait genre. Both Shearer West and Lauara Cummins both use Tracy Emin's (b.1963) work as an example of contemporary self-portraiture.⁵⁶ West presents Emin's *Everyone I've Ever Slept With 1963–1995* (1995) [Fig.16] as an example of the potentially disparate array of artworks that can be included under a definition of self-portraiture. In this work Emin shifts the signifier of portrayal from an iconic to an indexical relationship with the portrayed, in a similar manner to Quinn and Wallinger. By including Emin's work, West and Cumming suggest that any work exploring the portrayal of identity has the potential to be described as a portrait.

⁵⁵ Sir John Sulston, born 1942, was instrumental in mapping the human genome sequence.

⁵⁶ West, *Portraiture*, 212-213; and Cumming, Laura. *A Face to the World: On Self-portraits*. (London: Harper Press, 2010), 226-228.

Fig.14. Marc Quinn, *Sir John Edward Sulston*, 2001. Sample of sitter's DNA in agar jelly mounted in stainless steel, 12.7 mm x 8.5 cm

<http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw57555/Sir-John-Edward-Sulston>

Fig.15. Mark Wallinger, *Self Portrait (Times New Roman)*, 2012.

http://36.media.tumblr.com/tumblr_m6umepJsGZ1qi4z1yo1_1280.jpg

Fig.16. Tracy Emin, *Everyone I've Ever Slept With 1963-1995*, 1995. Appliquéd tent, mattress and light 122 x 245 x 214 cm

http://images.tate.org.uk/sites/default/files/styles/grid-normal-12-cols/public/images/emin_everyone_i_ever_slept_with_0.jpg?itok=r-6PhcB

15. The persistence of the conventional portrait

Despite the twentieth century experimentations within the portrait genre, and criticisms levelled at the field, the majority of contemporary portrait production continues to perpetuate the conventions of the traditional modern portrait. This is evident when considering the works shortlisted for the BP Portrait Competition, an annual event hosted by The National Portrait Gallery (London) that displays the talents of professional and amateur portrait painters from around the world.

An analysis of the winners of this award since 2010 demonstrates that the majority of portraits painted today continue to focus on attempting to image the identity of the portrayed through the head and facial areas, and in doing so continue to rely on physiognomic interpretations of the subject's facial characteristics. The centrality of the individual hampers the potential of the images to evoke sensations and recall experiences of a broader, shared, engagement with the world.

Pieter (2013) [Fig.17] by Susanne du Toit works within the portrait paradigm and relies heavily on physiognomic interpretations of the subject. An individual is presented - an identifiable named subject, posed and clothed in a manner that encourages assumptions to be made regarding the subject's character. The individual is the principle subject and there is very little within the image that conveys, or alludes to, broader human experiences or sensations.

Aleah Chapin's *Auntie* (2012) [Fig.18] functions initially as a represented likeness of a named subject, however, this image also connotes themes that go beyond the individual portrayed. In this work Chapin alludes to issues surrounding age, sexuality, imaging the body and the personal and social acceptability of nudity; additionally, in naming of the work *Auntie* Chapin introduces an almost incestuous element to the piece. For the connotational elements of this work to function physiognomic interpretations of the subject are necessary. It is largely through the head and facial area that the subject is defined and designated by the viewer according to the age, gender and disposition; it is this process of categorisation, in conjunction with an understanding

of contemporary attitudes to age and nudity that allows the broader meanings within the image to operate. Although the subject of the work transcends the individual, to a certain extent, the painting is still reliant on the mechanisms of faciality and on an external knowledge base for the indexical referents within it to function.

Fig.17. Susanne du Toit, *Pieter*, 2013. Oil on canvas, 108 x 83 cm

<http://www.susannedutoit.com/index.aspx?sectionid=1205487>

Fig.18. Aleah Chapin, *Auntie*, 2012. Oil on canvas, 147 x 96.5 cm

<http://www.aleahchapin.com/2011/mesgxblllof6jr4ilfey53d2ur75hvc>

Fig.19. Wim Heldens, *Distracted*, 2011. Oil on canvas, 75 x 55 cm

<http://www.wimheldens.com/portfolio/details/distracted/>

Distracted (2011) [Fig.19] by Wim Heldens utilizes a pose similar to those employed within Bourgeois portraiture [Fig.5]. A look to the side, a gaze that suggests the viewer is not looking at anything in particular, his body passive as his mind actively engages with abstract concerns. It is a pose that implies the subject's high-mindedness; he is not distracted by any tangible object of matter but with thought and contemplation. The pencil in the subject's hand reinforces this characterization, it implies writing or drawing, acts of mental engagement and creativity.

This purely a personal interpretation of the portrait enacts one potential physiognomic reception of the work and is not intended to be a definitive reading of the piece. It has been enacted to display the manner in which the traditional portrait facilitates, and relies on, physiognomic interpretation. This image does not communicate anything beyond the artist's skill and the suggested personality traits of the sitter. In prioritizing the individual this portrayal does not represent any broader human sensations or experiences, beyond being distracted by thought.

Fig.20. Daphne Todd, *Last Portrait of Mother*, 2010. Oil on wooden panels 65 x 92 x 5 cm

http://www.theartsdesk.com/sites/default/files/images/stories/ART/Fisun_Guner/Last_portrait_of_my_Mother_byDaphne_Todd.jpg

Last Portrait of Mother (2010) [Fig.20] by Daphne Todd functions differently to the examples given above as its principle subject matter is not the individual portrayed. The skeletal features of the artist's dying mother disturb the urge to categorise and subjectify the portrayed. Through the conjunction of image and title the subject of the painting becomes death. Death transcends the individual, who becomes a conduit for the expression of pathos, mortality, horror and loss.⁵⁷

16. Summary of findings following an analysis of the portrait as a means of facial imaging

The questions of *who* and *why* that surround the portrait detract from its potential in evoking the experience of a human encounter. The aim of this chapter has been to identify and analyse elements within facial imaging that detract from a generalised portrayal of humanity as a whole. The conclusions of these investigations are that artworks in which the face and head are presented as the central subject matter recall conventions of portraiture, which generate expectations within the viewer. In conjunction with these expectations the physiognomic impulse enables the classification and subjectification of the portrayed subject. In order to enhance the generalised aspects of the facial image, while diminishing the individualising and personifying features, it was deemed necessary for the following three aspects of the portrait to be removed:-

1. The avoidance of conventional portrait formats.

Hierarchies of depiction and the glorification of the subject are largely achieved through the incorporation of likeness into an idealising schema. The best means of avoiding the production of grandiose portrayals is to remove the any association between the depicted

⁵⁷ Image of death and their relationship to the portrait will be looked into in greater detail in the section covering medical illustration, see pages 66-69.

subject and the idealising schema; this can be achieved through the removal of any formulaic designs associated with honorific images. In avoiding conventional portrait designs the viewer's expectations of the facial image as a tool for honorific portrayal, will therefore be disrupted.

2. The use of the portrait as an affirmation of social roles and positions.

These aspects are signified through symbolic pictorial elements denoting the subject's vocational or social status. It was deemed necessary to remove the following aspects that could act these codified indicators of the sitter's role: clothing, instruments of work, indicators of wealth, status or any other objects or any background information that could pertain to the subject's social position or vocation.

3. The presentation of subjects based on their proximity the artist.

The act of portrayal serves to glorify the participating parties in doing so propagates notions of individuality, distinction and pictorial worth that are inherent within the modern portrait. The signification of proximity is enacted through signs, both iconic and indexical within the image and in any accompanying text that infers the identity or personality of the subject. Any suggestion of proximity between the artist and the subject was therefore removed from the images produced for this research project.

Between 1968 and 1978 the American Photorealist Chuck Close (b.1940) produced large scale (averaging around 270 x 220 cm), intricately detailed paintings images of family and friends. These works are divorced from much of the historical and ideological conventions that dictate the reading of facial images. Close uses the passport photo, or mug-shot, compositional format to avoid the traditional portrait schema. However, despite the use of the mug-shot Close's paintings still function as portraits. Close's paintings are deliberate allusions to named individuals and they are frequently identifiable members of his family or circle of friends. They are not

"anonymous portraits" as the forenames of the sitters are given.⁵⁸ Although this naming may not overtly identify the portrayed individual the fact that their likeness is accompanied by a written symbolic sign means that they are not anonymous. Furthermore, the use of forenames (and frequent use of abbreviated forenames) suggests a familiarity with the individual portrayed and this alludes to the close proximity of the sitter to the artist. In portraying those close to him Close's portraits perpetuate the notion of an honorific portrayal as the sitters are monumentalised through their depictions within large scale, hand-made objects.⁵⁹ The grandiose effects of portrayal are further propagated when the subject is a well-known artist, musician or other celebrity figure. In portraying public figures these portraits continue to work within the representation of elites' paradigm, with who constitutes being worthy of portrayal being dictated by the successful, or elite, artist.

The second problematic area that Close's work propagates is that they allow the implementation of physiognomic analytical and prejudicial processes based on external physical features. In an article for *Time* magazine the art critic Robert Hughes (1938-2012) states that Close's portraits do not have a "role." Here "role" is used to describe the facts surrounding the sitter that portraiture traditionally indexes: vocation, social status, moral standing etc.⁶⁰ Hughes goes on to assert that they are effectively "naked faces...pieces of unveiled skin with orifices...about Close's sitters one learns nothing." Contrary to Hughes' assertion Close's portraits do in fact retain a role, albeit a limited one, as it is possible for Robert Storr to assert that *Richard* (1969) [Fig.21] is a "Martin Scorsese-like thug," in *Cindy* (1988) [Fig.22], the artist and filmmaker Cindy Sherman is "hiding herself behind heavy librarian glasses, and affecting an out-of-fashion bobby-soxers ponytail,"⁶¹ while *Joe* (1969) [Fig.23], with his slicked back hair and thick spectacles, presents the appearance of "a clerk, engineer or accountant, with business shirt and tie."⁶² These roles may throw into question the notion of portrayal in that they present adopted roles, superficial

⁵⁸ William Dyckes describes Close's paintings as anonymous portraits in: "The Photo as Subject: The Paintings and Drawings of Chuck Close," in: Gregory Battcock, *Super Realism: A Critical Anthology* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1975), 152.

⁵⁹ Battcock, *Super Realism*, 151.

⁶⁰ Robert Hughes, "Close, Closer, Closest," *Time* 117 (1981): 17.

⁶¹ Storr, Richard. *Chuck Close*. P46

⁶² Storr, Richard. *Chuck Close*. P45

enactments of personality types. However, these projections of identity allow pathways of interpretation to function within the final paintings. Pathways of interpretation that operate through physiognomic principles, the viewer projects inner characteristics onto the subject from a reading of their external attributes; they are, therefore, not the "naked faces" that Hughes describes.

Fig.21. Chuck Close, *Richard*, 1969. Acrylic on canvas, 274.3 x 213.4 cm

<https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/736x/a2/1e/2e/a21e2e3e98d234748cff430491c38211.jpg>

Fig.22. Chuck Close *Cindy*, 1988. Oil on canvas, 259.1x 213.4 cm

http://arttattler.com/Images/NorthAmerica/Illinois/Chicago/Museum%20of%20Contemporary%20Art/Constellations/18-f7fa7Close_Cindy.jpg

Fig.23. Chuck Close, *Joe*, 1969. Acrylic on canvas, 274.3 x 213.4 cm

http://www.saatchigallery.com/imgs/artists/aipe_artist_chuck_close/chuck_close_1.jpg

One of the aims of this project is to remove as many signifying attributes from the facial image as possible and in doing so inhibit any physiognomic readings, in order to produce depictions of the human subject that are freed from any enacted roles. Two additional aspects of conventional facial imaging were addressed, so that they could be subsequently removed, or diminished, within the conceptual design for facial imaging.

4. Physiognomic interpretations based on facial characteristics.

In removing elements 1-3 we are left with little more than the mug shot, a facial image designed to convey likeness for the purposes of identification. However, as has been established in the section on physiognomy the mug shot can be used as a means of social classification and objectification. Prejudicial physiognomic interpretations of character persist when viewing images of this type. However, these aspects of the facial image are difficult to avoid as they are naturally occurring signifiers and not elements deliberately incorporated by the artist. It was decided that the best means of deflecting the mechanisms of faciality would be to minimise the depiction of any traits that could suggest ethnicity, gender, intellect, social standing, morality, as well as any psychological or expressive indicators.

5. Enacted projections of self.

Having established that the visualisation of identity in a two dimensional format is problematic it was decided that any aspect of the facial image that projected the subject's identity should be avoided. For this reason any hairstyles, poses, facial expressions, or

any other enacted projections of personality should all prohibited from the facial images produced for this project.

In removing these five critical elements the aim of this project is to obscure the identity of the sitter to such an extent that a single individual is not monumentalised. Through the removal of as many identifiable elements as possible, and, by naming the images numerically rather than indexically, there is an avoidance of any perceivable links between the sitters and the artist. True anonymity confounds any affirmation of the artist's elite status as the selector of those worthy of portrayal, as, in effect, no one is being portrayed.

Chapter Two

The Conceptual Framework underpinning the Facial Images

1. Eye tracking and the internal and external facial characteristics

In removing the 5 elements from the facial image that allow the propagation of honorific and prejudicial physiognomic readings, a conceptual basis for this research project was created. In order for the facial image to remove as many aids to interpretation and identification as possible an investigation in to how human beings recognise, perceive and interact with facial images was conducted.

A.L Yarus (1914-1986) pioneered eye movement tracking technology in 1967 in order to analyse the ways in which people look at faces.⁶³ Yarus revealed that when viewing images of the face the viewer's gaze centred significantly on the triangle of internal features within the faces, specifically between the eyes and the mouth (Figs.24-25). This research indicates that these are the significant elements of the face in terms of human engagement and interaction. Following Yarus's work it was concluded that the internal facial features would act as the basis for the foundational design for this research project, as they achieve a greater engagement with the viewer than the external features.

A second reason for removing the external features of the face was that they form the outline, or frame, of a person's face and are a significant factor in the recognition of individuals. People that we are familiar with can readily be identified by their internal facial features alone: the eyes nose and mouth; this is largely due to the effects of prolonged exposure and interaction on the recognition process. Unfamiliar faces are less well recognised through their internal features alone and the recognition of unfamiliar faces relies heavily on external features in conjunction

⁶³ Alfred L Yarus, *Eye Movements and Vision*, trans. Basil Haigh (New York: Plenum Press, (1967)

with the internal.⁶⁴ As the intended viewership of this project would not be familiar with the sitters, the removal of the external features would severely hamper any potential future identification of the sitter. A vital aid to identification was, therefore, removed through the extraction of the external facial elements.

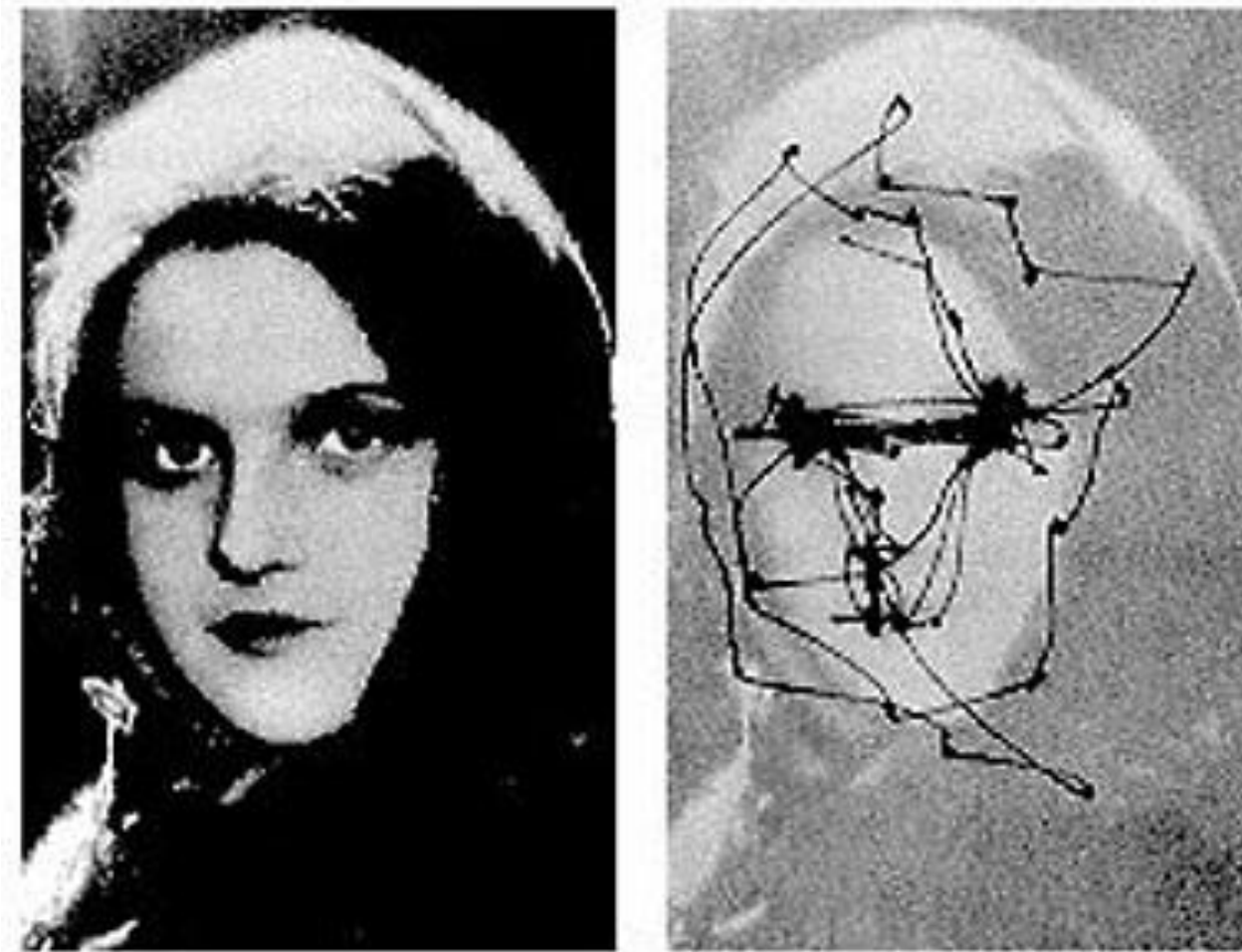


Fig.24. Image from Yarbus's study: records of the eye movements during free examination of the photograph with both eyes for one minute. Yarbus, *Eye Movements and Vision*, 179.

⁶⁴ Ellis, H. et al, "Identification of familiar and unfamiliar faces from internal and external features: some implications for theories of face recognition." *Perception* 8 (1979): 431-439.

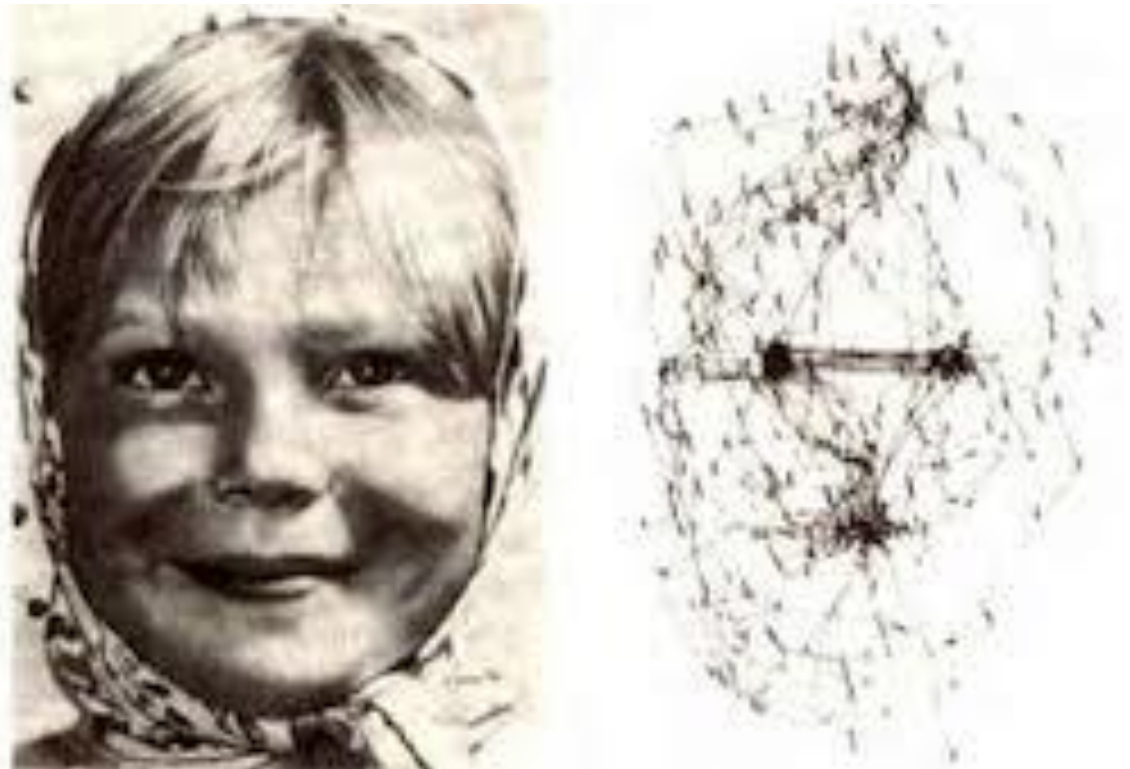


Fig.25. Image from Yarbus's study: records the eye movements during free examination of the photograph with both eyes for 3 minutes. Yarbus, *Eye Movements and Vision*, 180

An additional effect of removing the external facial features was that areas of the face that are commonly modified to express identity or personality could be circumvented. A person's hair is frequently an indicator of gender and can be shaped, coloured or otherwise manipulated; actions which incur individual and social signification.⁶⁵ The jawline, on male subjects, can also be manipulated and formed to signify individuality, gender and/or other social groupings.

Within the internal facial features the eyebrows play an important role when identifying faces and can also act signifiers of gender, emotional state and social status.⁶⁶ Through manipulation eyebrows are incorporated into projections of constructed social roles, with thin, plucked

⁶⁵ For an in depth views of the signifying aspects of hair see: Victoria Sherrow, *Encyclopaedia of Hair: A Cultural History*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press (2006) and Diane Simon, *Hair: Public, Political, Extremely Personal*. New York: St. Martin's Press (2000).

⁶⁶ For an analysis of the way in which eyebrows convey social status see: Keating et al "Facial Gestures Which Influence the Perception of Status" *Sociometry* 40, No. 4 (Dec., 1977): 374-378. It has also been suggested that the thickness of eyebrows, dictated by trends in fashion, is indicative of the economic situation of society at large, see: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/ed4c5f94-9247-11e2-851f-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2Wwyr6XWi>

eyebrows being signifiers of femininity. The high contrast and linearity of the eyebrows means that even subtle variations in their position can play a communicative role over large distances, with the eyebrows acting as indicators of emotion and as an aid to sexual differentiation.⁶⁷ It has been demonstrated that the eyebrows' role in facial recognition is perhaps greater than of the eyes and the removal of the eyebrows from a facial image makes identifying an individual particularly difficult.⁶⁸ It is for these reasons that the eyebrows were removed from the facial imaging design.

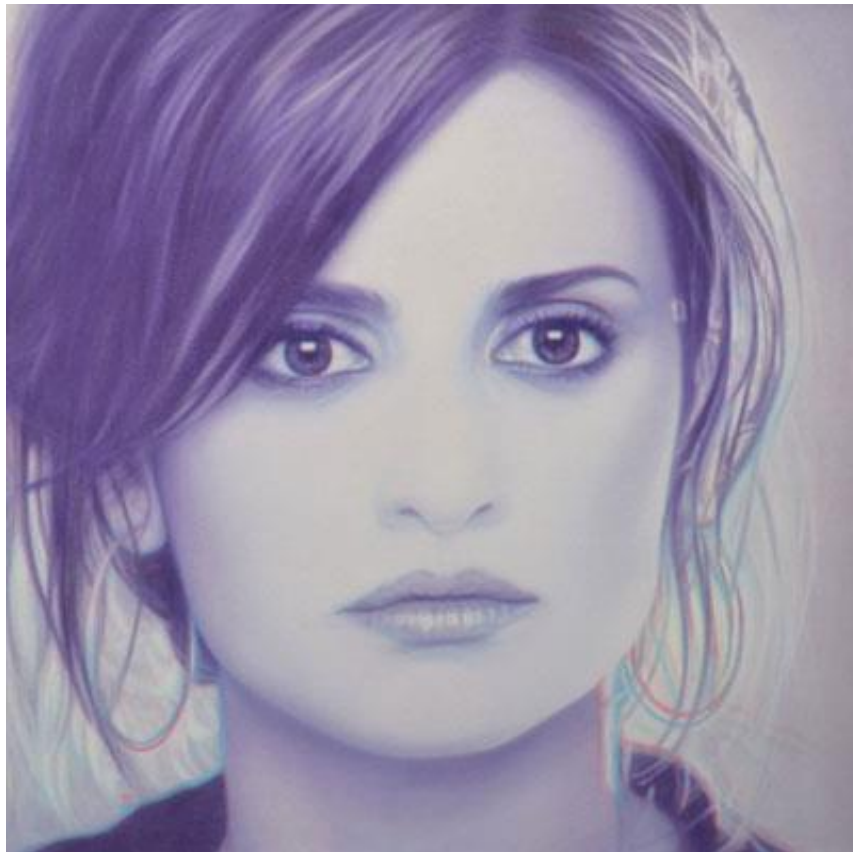


Fig.26. Josie McCoy, *Raimunda III*, 2011. Oil on canvas, 100 x 100 cm

The image above, painted by the British artist Josie McCoy (b.1969), presents a highly reductive portrait of the actress Penelope Cruz (b.1974) [Fig.26]. A large amount of visual data had been

⁶⁷ For more on the eyebrows role in communicating emotions, see: Paul Ekman, "About brows: Emotional and Conversational Signals", in Mario Von Cranach, *Human Ethology: Claims and Limits of a New Discipline*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 169-202, and Paul Ekman, "Facial expression of emotion" *American Psychologist* 48 (1993): 384-392; for an account of the eyebrows' role in differentiating the sexes, see: Bruce, V et al. "Sex discrimination: how do we tell the difference between male and female faces?" *Perception* 22 no.2 (1993): 131-152.

⁶⁸ As has been demonstrated by Sadr, J. et al, "The role of eyebrows in face recognition" *Perception* 32, no.3 (2002): 285-93.

removed from the facial surface, however, the subject of image is still clearly identifiable, McCoy's work retains the minimal schema of recognition for that celebrity in order to allow the subject to be identified. Through the initiation of the compositional square format the identity of the subject within McCoy's work is obscured [Fig.27]. This obscuring of identity is extended through the removal of the eyebrows [Fig.28].



Fig.27. *Raimunda III* (cropped) with eyebrows retained.



Fig.28. *Raimunda III* (cropped) with eyebrows removed.

2. The compositional design

The natural arrangement of the internal facial features facilitates the use of a square composition. The eyes, nose and mouth fit neatly into a symmetrical format with the distance between the left and right edges of the eyes is approximate to the distance from the top of the upper eyelid to the lowest area of the bottom lip. This compositional structure allowed all of the internal facial elements to completely fill the paintings, as well as allowing an additional cheek area to be depicted. This square format also allows for a fixed iconic structure, the repetition of which results in the viewer not having to consider any differences in composition between the paintings and instead allows them to focus purely on the significant differences - line, colour, tone and painterly application - between each of the paintings. This fixed format also serves to remove any compositional decision making from the picture making process. The art critic Thomas B. Hess (1920-1978) highlights the potentiality of repeated symmetry present in Barnett Newman's (1905-1970) colour field painting [Fig.29]:

By using symmetry, by placing the zip dead center [sic] in the painting, the constricting apparatus of composition was wiped away at a sweep. By achieving what composition aims for - balance, harmony, scale, order - symmetry makes the whole elaborate, academic ritual obsolete. For the artificiality of its dicta, symmetry substitutes two related dangers: boredom and over simplicity... Newman discovered in *Onement I* that whatever the perils of monotony might be, symmetry more than compensated for them by destroying the whole art-look, art-object convention...the banal can be a sign of the common, of the primitive, archaic and elemental, whence it might be just a step to the universal, to that intellectually winged simplicity which is the object and craving of art. By reducing composition to the equivalent of zero, Newman also raised color [sic] to its highest power.⁶⁹

Fig.29. Barnett Neman, *Onement I*, 1948. Oil on canvas, 69.2 x 41.2 cm

<http://www.moma.org/collection/works/79601>

⁶⁹Thomas B Hess, *Barnett Neman*. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1971), 55

By reducing composition to the equivalent of zero this research project balances and harmonised the facial image through the employment of the internal facial features. The square crop around these features creates a harmonious, balanced, symmetrical framework, or schema, that provided the basis for the majority of the work produced for this project.

3. The incorporation of surface detail

Having established a minimal schema for the facial image it was necessary to deduce the best means of using this foundation to convey the experience of looking at and scrutinizing the human face. The schema alone, lacking in any but the simplest of referential data, displays a severely limited and abstracted experience of facial engagement and fails to effectively simulate the sensations and effects generated when encountering the human face; sensations based on a shared understanding of skin and flesh created through a universal visual experience. In order to effectively produce an immersive, cognitive engagement with the viewer it was, therefore, necessary for the facial images to be as believable as possible.

The transition from the idealized facial schematic of the medieval icon image to the naturalistic early modern portrait demonstrates how additional representational detail, beyond the minimal schema of recognition, increases the perceived veracity, or realism of an image.⁷⁰ Realism and idealism are both ways of producing and receiving an artwork, neither of which has a greater claim to be an approximation of reality than the other.⁷¹ However it is easier believe that an image has its origins in reality when it appears to be a mimetic rendering of perceivable matter.

It was therefore decided that the compositional framework would be filled with as much detail as possible with the work produced by Chuck Close providing a precedent for this approach. Close's work demonstrates that a level of visual interest can be achieved through representations of the minute details of the bodily surface, specifically in the head and facial areas. Like Close's

⁷⁰ See section on increased naturalistic tendencies within the icon, page 16.

⁷¹ Beard and Henderson, *Classical Art: From Greece to Rome*, 230

works, this the image produced for this research project displays the colours, tones, lines and forms visible on the human face, qualities of the face that are simultaneously idiosyncratic and evocative of common bodily experiences.

When studied myopically the minutia of the body becomes divorced from the portrayed individual. When the details of the face are abstracted from the gestalt experience the pores, hairs, blemishes and wrinkles do not to act as a signifying elements open to physiognomic interpretations. Giles Deleuze presents the cinematic close-up an example of this effect: “Ordinarily the human face plays a role that is at once individualating [sic], socialising and communicative; in the close-up, however, the face becomes an autonomous entity that tends to destroy this triple function: social roles are renounced, communication ceases, individuation is suspended.”⁷²

Within the close-up image the face becomes a landscape and the visual qualities of the surface become of greater significance than any communicative iconic or indexical signs:

[The] face “is a surface: traits, lines wrinkles; a long, square, triangular face; the face is a map.” (D1978: 179). A series of layers or strata, the face becomes a landscape when it is abstracted from the world at large and understood as a deterritorialized [sic] space or topography. It is a displacement of what a perceiver makes of the milieu and the faces that he or she discerns...the rotundity of a person's cheeks can resemble hillocks or mesas the eyes might be reflective pools and ponds; the nostrils lairs and caves, and the ears at

⁷² Daniel W. Smith, *Essays on Deleuze*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 205. “D1978: 179” refers to: Giles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Athlone, 1986), 170

once quarries and cirques. Yet the landscape or face looks at its spectators, calling their gaze into question or even psychically “defacing” them.⁷³

Both the images produced for this project and Close’s portraits transform the face in to a landscape through the detailed rendering of the facial surface. However there are a number of significant differences in the way that my art production deterritorialises the face and that of Close's approach. For Close the precise transposition from a single source photograph into a painting is fundamental to his conceptual and process based approach. The first of Close’s enlarged portraits, *Big Self Portrait* (1968) [Fig.30], provides the basis for all of Close’s subsequent portrait works. In this painting the visual information contained in the final painting had no more, or no less, visual information than the original source photographic material. Close presents a monocular view of the human face complete with photographic aberrations that highlight its mechanical origins.⁷⁴

⁷³ Parr, Adrian. *The Deleuze Dictionary: 2nd Revised Edition*. (Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2010), 101

⁷⁴ See section on Photorealism/Hyperrealism for Close conceptual strategy in replicating the photographic image, pages 71-76.

Fig.30. Chuck Close, *Big Self Portrait*, 1967-68. Acrylic on Canvas, 273 x 212 cm

<http://www.walkerart.org/collections/artworks/big-self-portrait>

In my art production a mass of visual data is acquired through multiple photographic sources.⁷⁵ This abundance of data is used, in part, to maximise the detail within the image. The multi-ocular approach allows for greater control within the image as different sources can be selected depending on the visual qualities that they can bring to the final painting. The system also removes the monocular photographic look from the paintings.

Fig.31. Richard Estes, *Madison Square*, 1994, oil on linen, 106.7 x 198.1 cm

<http://www.meisलगallery.com/lkmg/artist/works/detail.php?wid=470&aid=15>

To implement the transposition of the photographic images into the paintings, a compositional technique pioneered by the American photorealist Richard Estes (b.1932) was employed.⁷⁶ Estes paints manufactured scenes of cityscapes based around a classical compositional structure, which incorporates harmony and balance into paintings that initially appear to be photographs [Fig.31.].⁷⁷ In each painting, Estes uses a number of source photographs that he amalgamates into a perspective based design, replete with numerous vanishing points. This technique gives Estes a great deal of control over the pictorial space, allowing him, through the incorporation of

⁷⁵ The details of exactly how multiple photographic sources are produced and utilised will be dealt with in Chapter 4.

⁷⁶ This technique has been appropriated by the contemporary British hyperrealist painter Clive Head, see: Paraskos, Michael, and Head, Clive. *Clive Head*. (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate/Lund Humphries, 2010).

⁷⁷ See: Jencks, Charles, *Post-modernism: The New Classicism in Art and Architecture*. (New York: Rizzoli, 1987), 24 & 129-32

reflections, to depict objects from different angles and vantage points.⁷⁸ Following Estes' precedent, this project incorporates numerous source photographs into a compositional structure. Whereas, Estes used multiple photographs in order to depict objects from different angles this project utilised numerous source photographs to enhance, clarify and delineate minute details at the limits of human vision.

4. Scale

The scale of the works produced for this research project was, in part, dictated by the demands of representing the facial surface in as much detail as possible; the larger the area the greater amount of information could be conveyed. In addition to the dictates of surface information the large scale of the images serves to monumentalise the human face. This is something Chuck Close had previously achieved with his gigantic portraits of friends and family, however, similar monumentalisations of the human head and face can be found in many varied cultures across temporal and geographical instances. The enlargement of the human form turns it in to a spectacle of contemplation and awe.

Additionally, the monumentalisation conducted in this project articulates a reaction to the dominance of advertising imagery within contemporary Western Capitalist Civilisation, in which enlarged, idealised human forms are put on display in order to sell commodities. In idealising the human form advertising images perpetuate the notion that certain aspects of the human body are inherently flawed.

⁷⁸ For an account of Estes classical composition and photograph composite techniques see: Meisel, Louis, K and Estes, Richard. *Richard Estes: The Complete Paintings 1966-1985*. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc, 1986), 10-11, 26-27 & 44

Throughout art history there is an on-going dialogue between the idealised body and its antithesis in realism.⁷⁹ The realist impulse is a desire to present images that include, or exaggerate upon, aspects of reality that are not conventionally considered to be beautiful, or ideal. The art historian Linda Nochlin (b.1931) describes the realist body as a rejection of conventional beauty that seeks to find worth and interest in areas bypassed in the idealised image. Nochlin positions: "'real' beauty as 'realist' beauty, and therefore as a kind of antibeauty...all nonbeauty is not ugliness: there is a wide range of possibilities, including attractiveness...piquancy, sensuousness, elegance and so on."⁸⁰ It is necessary for grand scale images of the human face within this research project to include non-beautiful elements of reality so that they appear to be truthful representations and not idealised constructions.

The Australian sculptor Ron Mueck's (b. 1958) experiments with scale in the production of highly detailed, frequently nude figures arranged in a manner that connotes an overriding emotional state or suggests a causal narrative.⁸¹ He distorts the scale of these images, an effect that enhances the sensations produced when viewing the works. In the monumental piece *Boy* [Fig.32], Mueck presents a five metre child that huddles as if in fear. Although the sculpture is substantially larger than life the details of the skin, the pores and hairs, retain a life like scale. This may have been implemented in order to maintain a bodily reference to the viewer.⁸² However, it may also be possible that if Mueck detailed the minutia of the surface appropriate to the scale of the figure the surface information could become of too great a visual significance and may interfere with, or dominate over, the overriding desired sensation achieved through the contradicting elements of size, age and fear. In his oeuvre Mueck's primary objective is to convey experiences, emotional states and sensations generated through manipulation of the human figure, to this end scale becomes a means of amplifying or diminishing certain sensations. Mueck

⁷⁹ For an history of this dialogue, see: Umberto Eco, *On Beauty: A History of a Western Idea*, trans. Alastair McEwen. (London : Secker & Warburg, 2004) and Umberto Eco, *On ugliness*, trans. Alastair McEwen. (London : Harvill Secker, 2007)

⁸⁰ Nochlin, Linda. *Bathers, Bodies, Beauty: The Visceral Eye*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 199.

⁸¹ As in the work *Youth* (2009) a young man lifts up his t-shirt to analyse a wound in his abdomen, this image suggests a causal series of events leading up to the wounding.

⁸² As Natasha Mayo asserts in: Mayo, Natasha. *An Investigation into the Potential of Ceramics to Expressively Render Flesh and Skin on the Human Body*. (PhD Dissertation, University of Wales Institute, Cardiff, 2004), 94-95.

does not set out to conduct an investigation into the potential for a myopic, visceral way of seeing in order to recall sensations and experiences of looking, which are the central drives and the reason for an enlarged scale within my works.

Fig.32. Ron Mueck, *Boy*, 1999. Mixed media, 490 x 490 x 250 cm

<http://en.aros.dk/visit-aros/the-collection/boy/>

5. Classicism and the monumental human form

The formation of a facial imaging framework for this research project presents the face as a monumentalisation of an aspect of human engagement. In reducing the facial area to a limited, symmetrical, harmonious design representative of humanity at large, a schema was created that recalled images of the human form found in antiquity. The classical presentation of the generalised ideal, or conceptual, human form presents a non-specific spectacle of mankind where the image of one man or woman represents all.

This ideal form, or idea, principle is articulated in the Platonic notion of the object/concept relationship.⁸³ In Plato's philosophy each object in the world has a conceptual, or ideal, basis that transcends its physical form. For example, we can think of many disparate, specific examples of

⁸³ Monumentalised human faces representative of mankind at large are not derivative of Platonic thought and have existed globally and throughout the history of art. Plato's account of the ideal can be seen to theories this creative impulse.

men or women that vary in shape, colour, size, personality etc.; however, we can also conceive of a generalised idea of man, woman or of humanity as a whole, an eternal form or idea of a human being.⁸⁴

Antique monumental representations of the human figure attempted to visualise this generalised conceptual figure within images of gods and mythological subjects. Classical Greek sculpture enacts what the architectural theorist Charles Jencks (b. 1939) terms "ideal realism."⁸⁵ Ideal realism is a contradictory union that attempts to represent the ideal, conceptual form of an object within a realistic representation of reality, as classical archaeologist Percy Gardner (1846-1937) puts it: "Human feelings, awe of the gods, love of beauty, desire for perfection, were always moulding natural forms into something belonging not wholly to the conditions of time and space, but to that world of archetypal forms of which Plato speaks, and which we call the ideal world."⁸⁶

Neo-Platonism developed during the third century, following notions put forward by the philosopher Plotinus. Plotinus adapted Plato's ideal/real binary and added to it a third element, a singularity from which all ideas and matter originate. Subsequently Christian thought influenced Neo-Platonism with the element of a singularity being equating to God. Neo-platonic philosophy had a great influence on art production during the Renaissance period.⁸⁷ Ernst Gombrich makes these observations on the Neo-Platonism's influence on art:

⁸⁴ Plato's philosophy of conceptual and ideal forms is never fully defined or articulated in his writings. The notion appears in throughout his dialogues; on the whole the early works speak of a shared nature while the later works deal with imperfect copies of perfect originals. Iris Murdoch, "Fire in the Sun: Why Plato Banished Artists" in Alison Denham ed., *Plato on Art and Beauty*. (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan 2012), 3-33.

⁸⁵ Charles Jencks, *Post-modernism: The New Classicism in Art and Architecture*. (New York: Rizzoli, 1987), 127.

⁸⁶ Percy Gardner, "Idealism in Greek Art" *The Art World* 1, no. 6 (March 1917): 419-421.

⁸⁷See: Aphrodite Alexandrakis and Nicholas J Moutafakis. *Neoplatonism and Western Aesthetics*. (Albany: State University of New York), 2002.

Neo-Platonism tried to assign to art a new place...they argued, that the painter...must purify the world of matter, erase its flaws, and approximate it to the idea...aided in this by the knowledge of the laws of beauty, which are of harmonious, simple geometrical relationships, and by the study of those antiques that already represent reality “idealised”, i.e., approximated to the Platonic idea.⁸⁸

Greek Art and Neo-Platonism perform a distillation and purification of mankind into his ideal form and in the process the details of the human surface are frequently avoided. Surface details are omitted because of their apparent specificity and impurity; however, these omissions are problematic. Pores, blemishes, hairs, blood vessels, moles, wrinkles, growths, wounds and scars may seem to be idiosyncratic surface details that are, in part, formed by the life an individual. However, as this project aims to demonstrate, these surface attributes are in fact universal aspects of the human condition. In making the surface detail apparent the purification of the human surface is revealed to be based on a false assumption; that the essence of humanity is separable from the specific make up of an individual. From a purely material and secular viewpoint can a concept of man or woman really exist without surface details, without organs, without biology? There is, therefore, no reason why a monumentalisation of humanity should, necessarily, avoid surface details.

6. Ideal realism and medical illustration

The negation of identity, the avoidance of hierarchical imaging frameworks and social depictions, and a concentration on delineating tangible biological matter gives the images produced for this research project an affinity with the, largely, pragmatic art of medical illustration. Medical illustration is primarily produced as a means of illuminating texts and delineating and clarifying aspects of anatomy in order to enhance an understanding of the human body. Like the artworks produced for this project, medical illustrations, generally, avoid any depiction of social

⁸⁸ Ernst H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study of the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*. (London: Phaidon, 1994), 133.

hierarchies and tend not to individualise the human figure, as the primary function of medical illustration is to convey visual information about the human body.⁸⁹

In conveying this information medical illustrators have frequently utilised handmade reproductions as the hand drawn image can simplify and emphasise visual information, remove unnecessary background elements, and produce clear, detailed, focused and precise images.⁹⁰ The acts of selection, immersion and manipulation involved in the production of hand-crafted images cannot be replicated in photography as the photograph cannot discern or extract necessary data from irrelevant information.

The paintings produced for this research project also utilise hand crafted images to delineate, clarify and differentiate particular elements of human body from the movement and chaos of lived experience. However, they do not do so for elucidatory or pedagogical purposes. The aim of my work is to reproduce and distil, from the chaos of world, the sensations and experiences felt while encountering another human being's face. This project has not been undertaken to illuminate any text nor to enlighten the viewer as to the biological functions of the skin.

The history of medical illustration has certain parallels with the history of portraiture. It moves from an abstracted schematic format, constituted in reductive representation, to an increased naturalistic sensibility during the Renaissance period.⁹¹ Within medical illustration, as in portraiture the demands of representing the human subject have to be balanced with idealistic,

⁸⁹ As an example of the pragmatic nature of medical illustration and for an outline of its primary purposes see: Mary Helen Briscoe, *A Researcher's Guide to Scientific and Medical Illustrations*. (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1990).

⁹⁰ See: Tsafirir, J and Ohry, A, "Medical illustration: from caves to cyberspace", *Health Information & Libraries Journal* 18, Issue 2 (June 2001): 99–109; Caswell, A. "Medical illustration: from Netter to computers" *Medical Journal of Australia* 18 (1992): 705-6 and Briscoe, *A Researcher's Guide to Scientific and Medical Illustration*, 17

⁹¹ See: Robert Herrlinger, *History of Medical Illustration: from Antiquity to A.D.1600*. (London: Pitman Medical and Scientific Publishing, 1970).

realistic and stylistic drives, expectations and interpretations.⁹² In edifying understanding and knowledge of the body medical illustration can take on many disparate forms, from graphs or tables to linear diagrams to full colour mimetic depictions and even fantastical interpretations of reality.⁹³

The most pertinent examples of medical illustration, in terms of this research project, are the anatomical illustrations produced by Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519). Leonardo devoted 20 years of his life to study the human anatomy and dissected over 30 cadavers in this endeavour, from which he produced over 700 drawings. Leonardo produced realistic, intricately drawn studies, accompanied by highly insightful texts, of dissected bodies, which delineate and elucidate a number of bodily systems and relations. In these images Leonardo depicts internal bodily functions within the context, where possible, of a living figure. Leonardo placed the workings of the body in-situ to give his studies a sense of life and movement. In conducting this display of the organism and the human, Leonardo utilised elements of both living and dead models to create a synthesis between a typical anatomical figure and a real model displayed with all of its idiosyncrasies [Figs. 33-34].⁹⁴

The union of the typical with the specific is a core element within this research project. Not a union of internal bodily functions with exterior form, the dissected with the intact, the living and the dead, but a union between the microscopic, idiosyncratic detail within a facial model representative of mankind in general. The viscera Leonardo depicted are the equivalent of the hairs, pores and wrinkles present in my work. The figure in motion Leonardo used to display the living body is replaced with a gaze that, in engaging the viewer, similarity evokes a sense of life within the depicted subject.

⁹² The between realism and idealism apply to representational painting in general, see Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, for a detailed account of the schematic and naturalistic devices used in illusionistic art.

⁹³ For examples of the array of images that can be potentially classified under medical illustration see Jean Roussetot, *Medicine in Art: A Cultural History*. (New York:McGraw-Hill, 1966).

⁹⁴ Herrlinger, *History of Medical Illustration*, 70.



Fig.33. Leonardo da Vinci, the superficial anatomy of the shoulder and neck, c. 1510-11. Pen and ink with wash, over black chalk, 29.2 x 19.8 cm



Fig. 34. Leonardo da Vinci, the muscles of the shoulder, c. 1510-11. Pen and ink with wash, over black chalk, 29.2 x 19.8 cm

Without the context of the living being the images forming the basis this research project could risk becoming dehumanised dead flesh, this effect is effectively illustrated in Rembrandt van Rijn's (1606-1669) *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp* (1632 [Fig. 35]). In this image the distinction between the living and the dead is clear. The figures surrounding the cadaver appear animate and actively engaged with the dissection before them. While the corpse is inert, its sagging face denies individualisation as the viewer cannot engage with, or personalise, the dead; they can only treat the corpse as object and not subject. The engagement of the living actors with the dissection before the, is mirrored in the viewer's perception of the painting. The viewer is connected to the living subjects as we too become observers of Dr Tulp's lesson. We therefore become engaged with the living subjects in a way that we cannot with the dead subject, because we cannot empathise with the dead.

Fig.35. Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp*, 1632. Oil on Canvas, 216.5 cm × 169.5 cm



Chapter Three

The Effects Generated by the Conceptual Framework for Facial Imaging

As outlined in chapter one, an abundance of visual information grants an image a perceived veracity.⁹⁵ It was for this reason that a hyperrealist approach to image production was utilised. Hyperrealism, and its art historical predecessor Photorealism, involve the production of highly detailed, photo-like paintings that serve to disrupt the relationship between the reproduction and the original object. This is of significant value to this research project that sets out to distance the facial image, the reproduction, from the identity of the sitter, the original. In diffusing the delineations between the object and the image hyperrealist artworks transcend meaning and, instead, recall and evoke sensations generated when contemplating the detail of a fellow human's facial surface. Hyperrealist methodologies, techniques and concepts were hybridised with the visceral imaging methods employed by painters who have investigated the cognitive potential in the visualisation of flesh.

1. A brief history of Superrealism, Photorealism and Hyperrealism

Hyperrealism is an artistic style initiated in the late 1960s that rose in popularity and exposure throughout the 1970s and 80s. The key characteristics of this style can be identified as the utilisation of photographic imagery in the production of paintings, deliberate allusions to photographic sources, a visual analysis of image production and a deliberate imitation of photographic appearances. Hyperrealism was, initially, synonymous with the terms Superrealism and Photorealism. The term Hyperrealism was used in a European context while Photorealism was favoured in the United States; following an exhibition curated by gallery owner and art critic Louis Meisel. Meisel effectively established the genre by exhibiting a number of previously unconnected artists that shared similar conceptual and methodological approaches to painting.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Bryson, *Vision and Painting*, 56-66

⁹⁶ See: Letze, Otto. *Photorealism: 50 Years of Hyperrealistic Painting* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2013), 8.

The first generation of photorealist painters were a disparate array of art practitioners whose connection was based on their overt use of photographic imagery in the style of, and as a basis for, their work.⁹⁷ Superrealism was a term used by the British-born artist Malcolm Morley (b.1931) to distance himself from photorealist painting, a style that he saw as derivative of his pioneering work in the appropriation of photographs. Morley was the first artist to produce paintings where the photograph, or picture postcard imagery, is the principle subject matter, and not the depictions contained within the photograph [Fig.36].⁹⁸ For Morley the term photorealism held classist connotations, it implied a snobbery that suggested the working classes could only make paintings by copying photographs.⁹⁹ As the term Superrealism became synonymous with photorealism Morley took to calling his photo-derived art production "fidelity paintings".

Fig.36. Malcolm Morley, *Cristoforo Colombo*, 1965. Acrylic on canvas. 114.3 × 149.9 cm

<http://www.hallartfoundation.org/artist/malcolm-morley/artwork>

⁹⁷ See: Edward Lucie-Smith, *Super Realism*. Oxford: Phaidon, 1979

⁹⁸ Many artists have produced work based and photographs and with photographic appearances, see Deren Van Coke, *The Painter and the Photograph: From Delacroix to Warhol*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico P, 1972). However, the photorealists were the first practitioners to make the photograph the principle subject of their art.

⁹⁹ Robert Storr, "Let's get Lost: Interview with Malcolm Morely" *Arts Press* (May 1993), E4

Contemporary Hyperrealism can be seen as a development upon strategies first implemented by the early Photorealists. Although in recent years there has been a rise in a number of practitioners referring to themselves as hyperrealist artists as a means of distancing themselves from photorealistic output, which had been criticised for its adherence to surface, for synthesising photographs and being pointless, mundane, tasteless and retrograde.¹⁰⁰ These criticisms of Photorealism fail to recognise the contribution these artists made through their appropriation of photographic imagery which served to blur the image/object distinction and highlight the tenuous nature of the image's connection to reality. The Photorealists emerged from the dominant art paradigm of the 1960s that had championed a formalist approach to art production. Photorealism is an art movement that sought to reconcile figurative art with Greenburgian formalist art theory.¹⁰¹ Clement Greenberg (1909-1994) presented a critical analysis of painting, which concluded that representational painting was too reliant on the disciplines of sculpture and theatre in the production of illusions and was therefore unable to provide an adequate analysis of the mechanism and effects of painting. Greenberg argued that painting, like music, should be able to function without reference to, or reliance on, anything exterior to its own constituent parts. In formalist terms Photorealists collectively conducted an analysis into the nature of images through a process based methodology.

In conducting a modernist inquiry into the nature of images the Photorealists approached art production in a similar way to the art practitioners of late modernism in that image making, surface and process were the primary subject matter above any social, political or narrative content. The analysis of image making and the importance of process are apparent in the methodological approaches of Malcolm Morley and the photorealist portraits produced by the Chuck Close.

Chuck Close's large scale portrait images of family and friends conduct an almost Greenbergian investigation into the plastic qualities of the picture surface. These artworks relied on strict

¹⁰⁰ Jean-Claude Lebensztejn, "Photorealism, Kitsch and Venturi" *Substance* 10, no.2, issue 31 (1981): 75-104

¹⁰¹ Charles Harrison and Paul Wood eds., *Art in Theory, 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 555-560.

methodological and precise transpositional processes with the aim of achieving "within the parameters of representation...an all over [sic]...frontal, two-dimensional effect, such as he found in Jackson Pollock's (1912-1956) drip paintings,"¹⁰² where no one part of a painting held any greater importance than another.

It is through the devotion to surface information that Morley, Close, and their photorealist contemporaries, confuse the sign and its referent and in doing so problematise the object/image binary opposition. The object/image dichotomy has its roots in Plato's philosophies where the mimetic reproductions are always inferior to the original object: "Plato, it is said, opposed essence to appearance, the original to the image, the sun of truth to the shadows of the cave."¹⁰³ In Close's work the strict adherence to the photographic image, replete with photographic aberrations, and thorough a manual simulation of commercial printing processes, it is made apparent that the painted image refers to the photograph and not the object depicted within the photograph. The painted sign, therefore, simultaneously refers to both the photograph as object and to the photograph's content. The result of this simultaneous referencing is confusion over which is the original and which the copy, the iconic and indexical signifiers.¹⁰⁴ Reality itself is not the subject of the painting, the subject is another flat surface containing lines and coloured shapes. This flat subject matter can be read as a representation of reality and this produces within the image a contradiction between "absolute flatness and spatial illusionism."¹⁰⁵ This contradiction highlights the fact that images are nothing more than images, whether they are abstract or figurative they are still self-contained entities whose relationship with an external reality is fragile. Therefore, if reality is not the original object that the image attempts to represent then the formalist position that dialectically opposed abstraction to figuration is redundant, as all images are abstract, as Morley asserts: "I have no interest in subject matter as

¹⁰² Christopher Finch, *Chuck Close Work*. (Munich: Prestel, 2010), 32

¹⁰³ Smith, *Essays on Deleuze*, 4

¹⁰⁴ Jean-Pierre Criqui, "Locus Focus: Jean-Pierre Criqui talks with Jean-Claude Lebensztejn" *Art Forum*, summer 2003 accessed 12th June, 2013. <http://artforum.com/inprint/issue=200306&id=4887&pagenum=0>

¹⁰⁵ Jean-Claude Lebensztejn, "Photorealism, Kitsch and Venturi" *Substance* 10, no.2, issue 31: The Thing USA: Views of American Object (1981): 81

such or satire or social comment or anything else lumped with subject matter. There is only Abstract Painting...I accept subject matter as a by-product of surface."¹⁰⁶

Close's portraits highlight the artifice and abstract nature of the painted image through displaying the underlying grid used to transpose a photograph into a painting. This exposure, at close range, serves to segment parts of the canvas allowing the viewer to engage with the system of "art marks" that combine to produce the image.¹⁰⁷ To create the large portraits he became renowned for Close would take a single photograph, draw a grid over the image and enlarge each square of the grid onto a canvas. This mechanical operation mirrors his contemporaries' approaches to art production. In a reaction to the spontaneity inherent in the artworks produced by the Abstract Expressionists, Post-Painterly Abstract and Minimalist artists championed a conceptual, process based approach to image making. For Close the portrait image was principally a means to conduct an investigation into image making: "a demonstration of control, without which the results, intriguing as they may be as elaborations in the physiognomy of his subjects, would be valueless in terms of his primary concern, the anatomy of pictures."¹⁰⁸ Close employed portraiture within a formalist framework in order to conduct an enquiry into the making of pictures, for Close the human face was always peripheral, incidental, a realist means to a formalist ends.¹⁰⁹

The art works produced for this research project achieve a different end; they use immensely detailed images of a human face as a hook to engage the viewer in acts of corporeal seeing, to generate sensations and to facilitate reflections on the external attributes of human appearance. My art production responds to the Photorealists' efforts in generating confusion over the copy and original through the production of photographically referential images; images that display their origins reliance on photographic sources. The copy/original relationship is further confounded through the removal of as many identifying, hierarchical and physiognomic

¹⁰⁶ Malcolm Morley, "Statement" *Environment USA*, 1957-1966, Ninth Biennial of São Paulo, 89

¹⁰⁷ Battcock, *Super Realism*, 149

¹⁰⁸ Storr, *Chuck Close*, P3

¹⁰⁹ Close's later work concentrates less on mimetic veracity and more on the possibilities of colourisation within image production, demonstrates emphatically the conceptual thread underpinning Close's oeuvre

signifying elements as possible from the facial image, as the removal or reduction of these elements distances the image from its referent in reality.

2. Photographic fidelity

An abundance of visual detail within a photo-like painting, and a reproduction of photographic fidelity, serves to further disrupt the traditional image/object relationship by giving a painted reproduction the illusion of photographic truth. Photographic fidelity grants an image a perceived veracity as the image a camera produces is tied to its object of reference through the chemical and mechanical processes involved in the production of the photographic image. If a photograph of an object exists then it is safe to assume that the depicted object existed at the time the photograph was taken and that it is an accurate record of what the object looked like. In capturing the likeness of an object the camera also captures incidental and peripheral information. By incorporating this information into their paintings the Photorealists gave their images an air of credence through an association with the perceived truthfulness of the photograph. The photorealistic painting suggests that it contains a still image created directly from the light emitted by the original depicted objects therein, whereas, in actuality the painting does not have a direct cause and effect relationship with a concrete reality as it is a manufactured artefact.

3. Hyperrealism and the creation of new visual realities

In this research project the disruption of the object/image binary opposition, enacted through Photorealist strategies, combined with an abundance of visual information constitutes an adaptation of Photorealist approaches to image production and reception. Under the emerging definition of Hyperrealism the photograph becomes a starting point for the artist to create their own reality.¹¹⁰ This manufactured reality retains the outward appearance of the photographic source material but also operates as a visual manifestation of an idiosyncratic engagement with

¹¹⁰ Nicholas Oberly states that "there is no static definition of hyperreality" in: Nicholas Oberly, "Realism and Hyperrealism" *The University of Chicago: Theories of Media: Keywords Glossary*, 2003, accessed 2004. http://cent.uchicago.edu/glossary2004/realty_hyperreality.htm

the world.¹¹¹ Clive Head (b.1965), in the foreword to the hyperrealist anthology *Exactitude*, asserts that the Photorealists of today must consider a forty year history of Photorealistic painting when conceptualising their artworks: "The contemporary photorealist painting is concerned as much with representing this history as with the ideals of its originators as it is with rendering the mundane subject in paint."¹¹² In effect Photorealism becomes merely an artistic style, a mode that the contemporary artist may choose to utilise when producing an artwork. Head goes on to argue that we can no longer strive to represent an objective view of a concrete reality through the copying of photographic sources, as this desired objectivity is not possible since the act of transposing a photograph is now linked to the history of that action. He uses the term "Exactitude" to describe art practices that express an artist's ideas, thoughts and beliefs about existence through lifelike, or photo-like, imagery. Exactitude, or Hyperrealism, involves the construction of a new visual reality shaped by idiosyncratic motives that require a photographic fidelity to the appearances of a universally experienced reality in order to present the viewer with a convincing self-contained reality. Head argues that the notion of "realism" has been so undermined through the critique of objectivity within the postmodern era that we now live in an aftermath of realism, and in that aftermath artists can present a personalised, intensified vision of their existence "liberated from a troubled relationship with objective reality."¹¹³

The emerging new usage of the term Hyperrealism (or Exactitude) continued to utilise the image/object problematic employed by the Photorealists. Furthermore, hyperrealist art seeks to adjoin art production with philosophical notions first posited by the philosopher Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007). Baudrillard derided the mass production and consumption of mediated imagery within late modern capitalist society. He saw in contemporary society an order of the sign in which a procession of simulacra served to confuse the human experience of reality and,

¹¹¹ For a statement by contemporary artist Paul Cadden on the nature of his art production, see: Paul. Cadden, "Hyperrealism" *Paul Cadden* (2012), accessed January 2013. <http://www.paulcadden.com/#!/about/c10fk>.

Similarly Simon Hennessey defines his hyperrealist artistic output on his website: Simon Hennessey. "Biography" *Simon Hennessey*, accessed January 2013. <http://www.simonhennessey.co.uk/#!/simon-hennessey-biography/csgz>

¹¹² Clive Head, "Foreword" in Russell Taylor and Maggie Bollaert, *Exactitude: Hyperrealist Art Today*. (London: Thames and Hudson, 2009), 8

¹¹³ Clive Head, "Foreword", 19

eventually, replace the perception of reality entirely. Baudrillard's successive order of the sign is as follows:

it is the reflection of a profound reality:

it masks and denatures a profound reality;

it masks the *absence* of a profound reality;

it has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum.¹¹⁴

In this process the referent is lost under the weight of signs; the signs only ever refer back to themselves. One example of this is the current monetary exchange system. Initially there existed a system revolving around the exchange of goods and services. From this developed a system where a quantity of rare and/or valuable materials would be exchanged for goods and services, and this led to the development of coinage. Coins later came to be replaced, or supplemented, by paper money, agreements to pay a sum that would never be fulfilled. Today's economic exchanges, in the stock-market and increasingly at street-level, have dispensed with the physical object and function entirely through numbers on a database. The original, real, object has been replaced by a sign, a sign that no longer refers to anything tangible, the sign only ever signifies itself. Baudrillard's theories of the hyperreal lament the loss of reality in a world dominated by mediated imagery. Televisual news reports, reality TV, video games and cinema all blur the line between depth and surface the result being that reality, simulation and fiction become indistinguishable.

¹¹⁴ Baudrillard, Jean, and Glaser Sheila Faria. *Simulacra and Simulation*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994). 6.

4. The Simulacrum

Other theorists have approached notions of the hyperreal in a positive light and have speculated on how simulacrum can be utilised as a means of exploring the potential of the hyperreal. The art historian Michael Camille (1956-2002) defines the simulacrum as "An image without a model, lacking that crucial dependence upon resemblance to similitude, the simulacrum is a false claimant to being which calls into question the ability to distinguish between what is real and what is represented."¹¹⁵ The simulacrum threatens to expose all representation as false. Painting is an illusion whose links to reality are fragile, it was for this reason that Plato expelled the painters from his republic; Plato saw the painter as: "'the imitator,' who, 'being the creator of the phantom, who knows nothing of reality.'"¹¹⁶

Camille speculates on the possibility of a history of art based around the simulacrum rather than the traditional art historical object/copy binary relationship. Under this new lens of art history "Deleuze's analysis of Platonic and Lucretian theories of the 'phantasm' and surfaces, epidermis and atoms would be more useful than our modern measures of likeness."¹¹⁷ Deleuze's philosophy sought to overturn Plato's image/object binary, he argued that the implosion of the signifier and the signified creates loss of meaning through which images may be opened up to interpretation: the reduction of denotational elements therefore results in an enhancement of connotational interpretations. Floating signifiers are detached from their groundings in fixed meaning and, therefore, produce a "realm of sensation."¹¹⁸

Approaching the history of portraiture through the Deleuzian "phantasmic criticism of art"¹¹⁹ produces entirely different criteria for the success or failure of a painting and disturbs the foundations of portraiture entirely. If we are no longer considering the iconic relationship

¹¹⁵ Michael Camille, "Three Simulacrum" in Robert S Nelson and Richard Shiff eds., *Critical Terms for Art History*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), P35.

¹¹⁶ Camille, "Three Simulacrum," 36, quoting: Plato, *Republic X*, 601 c

¹¹⁷ Camille, "Three Simulacrum," 45

¹¹⁸ Camille, "Three Simulacrum," 46

¹¹⁹ Camille, "Three Simulacrum," 46

between the original and the copy, or contemplating the meaning of an image, then we are free to focus instead on the internal consistency of the image and the sensations it produces. Take, for example, the prolific self-portraiture of Rembrandt. Through the phantasmic lens the fidelity of these works to the human original is irrelevant, as Rembrandt's paintings continue to invoke sensations regardless of their representational value. Although it would be possible to compare the relational properties of the physiognomic features within each portrait in order to estimate the accuracy of the works this would be missing the point. Rembrandt's self-portraits collectively function as a document of a single human being's progression through life, the individual depicted is irrelevant. Rembrandt becomes the vehicle for the visual expression of pathos and the human condition. Individually each portrait displays the visual qualities evident in different periods of the artist's life: the confidence, ease and vibrancy of youth; the sagging flesh, melancholy and self-reflection of old age [Fig.37]. In the preparation and production of these works Rembrandt frequently produced studies of facial expressions in order to incorporate these within his imaginary images of himself. Through the lens of phantasmic criticism these studies of reality cannot be seen as attempts to capture an inner identity, instead, they were necessary to render the reality Rembrandt created as believable as possible. It is essential that the simulation and illusion must be credible in order to produce the desired sensation; the phantom is most effective when it closely resembles reality as it convinces the viewer that it is real.

The images produced for this research project function as simulacra, the reality on which they were founded is made unattainable and unrecognisable through the removal of the link between the image and its referent. They are phantoms that do not claim to re-present reality; instead they create their own reality in order to generate sensations in the viewer. One commentator on the exhibition that this thesis accompanies remarked that when entering into the room of faces she felt like Alice in Wonderland, miniaturised and gazed upon by giant figures. Viewing these images is not an experience based around meaning, similitude, veracity or adherence to an original; it is an experience in and of itself.



Fig.37.Rembrandt van Rijn, Self-Portrait, 1669. Oil on canvas, 86 x 70.5 cm

5. Haptic Viewing: a union of sight and touch

For Deleuze the primary flaw in representational painting is that it muffles the sensation generating effects of an artwork. The classical representational mode displays narrative or illustrative qualities that the viewer engages with, they relate the image to the object it represents and this causes the mind to seek recognition, connection and meaning within the depiction and this search for meaning muffled the immediacy and power that a painting could potentially yield. Deleuze saw representation as reliant on clichés and argued that photography was a superior means of generating narrative, illustrative and representational images.¹²⁰

Two distinct abstract strategies can be identified that sought to enact new pathways for painting that avoided the flaws found in representational painting. The first strategy was the formalist abstraction practiced by Mondrian and Kandinsky that sought to extract significant form from matter through "an arsenal of codified forms."¹²¹ The main fault Deleuze finds with this approach is that the images function on an intellectual level alone and rather than acting sensually; they are not sensual works as they present: "a plane of architectonic composition...primarily thought rather than felt, and called the spectator to a kind of 'intellectual asceticism.'"¹²²

An alternative abstract strategy can be seen in the works of the Abstract Expressionists. Practitioners of Abstract Expressionism sought to exhibit sensate forces through spontaneous mark making and the dissolution of form. The problem Deleuze identifies with Abstract Expressionism is that it confuses sensation; Abstract Expressionism formed "a space that is imposed upon the eye as an absolutely foreign power in which the eye can find no rest."¹²³ The

¹²⁰ Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith, (London: Continuum, 2005), 8-9

¹²¹ Smith. *Essays on Deleuze*. P100

¹²² Smith. *Essays on Deleuze*. P100

¹²³ Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 75

abundance of marks without form, therefore, generates too much visual information to effectively convey an overriding sensation.

Deleuze describes a third means of avoiding the cerebral effects of classical representation and geometric abstraction while also avoiding the sensual confusion of abstract expressionism. This alternative utilises a "figural"¹²⁴ approach to art production that "acts directly on the nervous system, rather than passing through the detour of the brain."¹²⁵ The work of Francis Bacon (1909-1992) provides an exemplar of this figural approach. Bacon utilised the figure, the human form, as a support to facilitate the painting of sensations. In Bacon's works, these sensations are everyday uncomfortable and horrific placements of the body. The body itself is not the object of depiction; it is a conduit that allows the suspension of a sensation within an image. Ordinary human and animalistic sensations - produced through vomiting, pain, copulation and screaming - are conveyed to the viewer through the controlled delineations, dissolutions of forms and through the contortions of the figure.

This images produced for this research project seek to impart images of the human face with a sensation generating content, to achieve this, the internal facial features act as the figural element. Whereas Bacon employed the human form to facilitate sensations of commonplace discomfort and horror, my paintings use the face as a framework on which to display an ordinary event, the encounter with another's face. The negative emotional charge Bacon employs is absent from my work, instead the sensation generating effects operate through a shared experience of skin, flesh and facial interactions.

¹²⁴ Jean-Francois Lyotard coined the term "figural" when discussing the Platonic idea/image dichotomy. Lyotard critiqued the perceived superiority of written work (ideas) over sensation generating images, see: Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, trans. Antony Hudek and Mary Lydon (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011)

¹²⁵ Smith. *Essays on Deleuze*, 92. Malcolm Morley similarly adopted a biological position to art reception stating: "It doesn't matter if you are Republican, Democrat, pervert or whatever. You're being affected by these paintings whether you like it or not because they are constructed in such a way that you have to get everything viscerally." Alan G Artner, "Malcolm Morley: Still Bucking Trends and Surprising His Peers", *Chicago Tribune* 27 (November 1983)

Bacon isolates the figure, placing it on a plane of uniform colour. This negates the possibility of the viewer forming relational connections between objects and inhibits any narrational or illustrative readings. When two or more figures are depicted they are unified figures - intertwined, wrestling, copulating - sharing sensations. In other works they are separate beings that share a common, overriding effect, a resonance across the space of the canvas, or between canvases in the triptych works. In Bacon's works the figure is not a wholly delineated entity and areas of colour bleed out of the body's contours, spilling over into the field of colour. This denies the interpretation of the field as background as the figure and the ground are intermingled [Figs.38-40].

Fig.38. Francis Bacon, *Head VI*, 1949. Oil on canvas, 93.2 x 76.5 cm

<http://www.leedsartgallery.co.uk/review/listings/l0019.php>

Deleuze refers to the philosopher Alois Riegl's (1858-1905) analysis of Egyptian artwork in contemplating the figure/ground relationship on Bacon's work. Riegl used the term "haptic" to describe the mode of close-up viewing used when studying Egyptian bas-relief images. For Riegl this was the art form that achieved the greatest link between the eye and the hand, "which allows the eye to function like a sense of touch."¹²⁶ In Bacon's work the link between the senses is achieved through a union of form and ground.

This haptic function becomes an essential part of the experience when viewing the images produced for this research project. Whereas Bacon connects the ground and the figure through fractured contours, the compositional foundations of my work incorporate the figure (the face) into the ground and the two become inseparable. This union negates any contemplative or cerebral engagement of the images as the figure is not placed in a situation and, therefore, no narrative or illustrative connections can be made. The union of the figure and the surface facilitates a haptic viewing process, allowing the surface to be simultaneously experienced as an evocation of illusory space and as a tactile object. The trace of the brushstroke is mirrored in the eye's movement across lines and contours.

A different form of haptic viewing is also enacted through the connection between the model, the artist and the viewer. The paintings produced for this research project are based on photographs; however, they replicate a sensation of engagement with another person that partly operates through a sense, or a shared notion, of the materiality of flesh. The paintings invoke a haptic vision in that the viewer enacts the same visual investigation of surface that the artist instigated, their eyes undulate over peaks and dips, pass across dry, moist and oily expanses and this visual exploration connects to the viewer's bodily experience.

¹²⁶ Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 122

6. Merleau-Ponty and the phenomenology of perception

Whereas the notion of haptic viewing implies a distinct difference between the senses of touch and sight that can be united under certain conditions, the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-61) avers that the two senses are not distinct. Merleau-Ponty postulates on the nature of human engagement with the world in *The Phenomenology of Perception* (1945).¹²⁷ He places the body at the centre of human interaction with the world. As we encounter the world we relate everything within it back to our bodily experience, so that we can understand a hard, rough or coarsely textured object through its contrasting qualities to the malleability and softness of our skin. The body is a form of consciousness within the world and the act of perception makes the body and the object encountered operate within the same scale, they constitute one another: "If my hand takes its place among the things it touches, it is in a sense one of them, opens finally upon a tangible being of which it is also a part. Through this criss-crossing within it of the touching and the tangible, its own movements incorporate themselves into the universe they interrogate, are recorded on the same map as it; the two systems are applied upon one another, as the two halves of an orange."¹²⁸ The body is at once the object and the subject, the observed and the observer, the measured and the measure.¹²⁹

From Merleau-Ponty's perspective we can understand colour, for example, through its similarity to, or deviation from, our bodily hues. Basic colour theory dictates that reds and oranges are warm colours and blues and greens are colder colours. Within Merleau-Ponty's account of perception, these colour sensations can be seen as coming from our body's relationship with colour. When the body is hot, the blood vessels that supply blood to the skin swell (vasodilation) allowing blood to flow nearer to the surface of the skin so that the excess heat can be transferred into the cooler air surrounding it; this process causes the skin to become red. Cold bodies become pale and the blue hues of skin become more apparent as blood vessels constrict

¹²⁷ *The Phenomenology of Perception* was first published in English in 1962. The edition used in this thesis is Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A Landes. (London: Routledge, 2012)

¹²⁸ Clive Cazeaux, ed., *The Continental Aesthetics Reader*. (London: Routledge, 2000), 166

¹²⁹ This summary of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is indebted to Natasha Mayo's elucidation of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological principles in her PhD thesis: Mayo, *An Investigation into the Potential of Ceramics to Expressively Render Flesh and Skin on the Human Body*, 41-42

(vasoconstriction), reducing the blood flow to the surface in order to reduce heat loss, our perception of these bodily qualities, informed by touch and sight, help to form our perception of colour.

The perception of colour also extends beyond the body and into our understanding of the world. When we touch a flame or a red-hot surface our sense of touch and our vision respond concurrently. Therefore, in our engagement with the world the senses are not distinct and operate symbiotically; Merleau-Ponty describes this fusion of the senses as “synaesthesia.”¹³⁰ For Merleau-Ponty the senses are not the distinct, quantifiable entities as they are held to be within the Gestalt theory.¹³¹ He supports this assertion by presenting case studies that demonstrate how, when one sensory mechanism is damaged other systems within the body work to compensate for that injury.¹³² Through our adherence to scientific delineation, a predisposition to think in differential and quantifiable terms, we have forgotten how to perceive the world in a primordial way, where all the senses operate simultaneously and cohesively, interacting and informing each other without any clear distinctions: "One sees the weight of a block of cast iron which sinks in the sand, the fluidity of water and the viscosity of syrup. In the same way, I hear the hardness and unevenness of cobbles in the sound of a car, and we can speak appropriately of a 'soft', 'dull' or 'sharp' sound."¹³³

For Merleau-Ponty an artist must awaken this sensual bodily perception of the world within their work so that their bodily experience may be conveyed to the viewer and interact with their perceptual experiences. In the case of my art works the sensuous union of sight and touch connects with the viewer's visual and tactile experiences of the human face. The facial image is therefore both measured against, and assimilated by, the viewer's perception. Through synaesthesia the image becomes connected to the viewer's perceptual corporeal experience, the

¹³⁰ Synaesthesia is Merleau-Ponty's term, used to describe the union of the senses: Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 238. The term arises from examples of patients with the medical disorder synaesthesia that are used by Merleau-Ponty to highlight the interconnectedness of the senses.

¹³¹ Where each sense is specific to a sensory organ, see: Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 162.

¹³² Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 9-10 & 117-119

¹³³ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 266-7

sight of the skin connects to the sensation of touch; the internal facial features, the direct gaze initiates sensations of human connectivity.

One of the effects produced by an abundance of visual information within the facial images produced for this research project is an enhancement of the sensate connection between the artist, the image and the viewer. The visual proximity of the image to the actual bodily surface simultaneously recalls the experiences and sensations produced through human interaction with others, and through the contemplation of the reflected self "my body can assume segments derived from the body of another, just as my substances passes into them; man is mirror for man. The mirror itself is the instrument of a universal magic that changes things into a spectacle, spectacles into things, myself into another and another into myself."¹³⁴

Fig.39. Francis Bacon, *Three Studies For Portrait of Lucian Freud*, 1964. Oil on canvas in three parts, each 35.6 x 30 cm

<https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/736x/b1/93/1e/b1931e ECB9281265aba87a5a30b7a556.jpg>

¹³⁴ Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Thomas Baldwin ed., *Maurice Merleau-Ponty Basic Writings*. (London. Routledge 2004), 300

7. Animality: an aspect of the human condition

In his study of Bacon, Deleuze draws attention to the removal of facial characteristics within Bacon's work. Deleuze argues that even when Bacon was specifically painting a portrait he still produces images of heads rather than faces [Fig.39].¹³⁵ The distinction between the head and the face being that the face is a "structured, spatial organisation that conceals the head."¹³⁶ Whereas, the head is of the body and the body is an "animal-spirit of man."¹³⁷ In Bacon's work, the figure is frequently defaced and an animalistic head replaces the subject's features, they become a being of movement and chaos that distorts and conceals the structural organisation of the face allowing the head to evoke the animality of the human condition [Fig.40].

Fig.40. Francis Bacon, *Head II*, 1949, oil on canvas, 81.3 x 66 cm

<http://www.studiointernational.com/images/articles/f/francis-bacon-2013/SID48931-b.jpg>

Within this research project, the face rather than the head is similarly connected to the human subject's animality, in a less violent, distorted and kinetic manner. The facial schema inhibits the physiognomic communicative potential of the facial structures. Added to this basic structure is an amalgamation of macro and microscopic detail that connects the facial image with its animal nature. An abundance of visual information in, for example, a nose highlights its function as a sensory organ. The minute hairs covering the surface, the nose's protrusion and its position

¹³⁵ The face's structure and organisation can be seen as being linked to the notion of faciality, discussed in Chapter 1, page 10. Although Deleuze does not overtly state that this is the case the structure of the face facilitates its communicative function as a projector and receiver of signification.

¹³⁶ Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 20.

¹³⁷ Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 20.

above the mouth allude to its sensate tasks of detecting, smelling and analysing the objects of the world and any objects entering the orifice beneath it.

The presence of the eyes initially acts as a means to engage the viewer with the human subject through the meeting of the gaze. However, this human connection only operates as an initial function of these images, it is a hook that holds the viewer's attention, recalls the bodily experience of human interaction and facilitates further engagement with the minutia of the facial surface. As the viewer examines the images in greater detail they become aware of the complex topography of the figure, for example, the muscle tissue visible in the iris becomes apparent and its functional nature is connoted. The eye in these works is, therefore, not presented as a window of the human soul but as a functioning animal part.

Fig.41. Lucian Freud, *Sunday Morning - Eight Legs*, 1997. Oil on canvas, 234 x 132.1 cm

<https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/736x/c3/24/87/c32487f32f6b985f18e9e282506ed485.jpg>

Fig.42. Lucian Freud, *Naked Girl with Eggs*, 1980-81. Oil on Canvas, 75 x 60.5 cm

http://ayay.co.uk/backgrounds/paintings/lucian_freud/naked-girl-with-egg.jpg

8. Paint as flesh

A similar fascination with the animality of the human subject can be found in the artworks produced by Lucian Freud.¹³⁸ Freud's work engages with a European painterly tradition emerging from Rembrandt and Velasquez and continuing on through the work of Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin (1699-1779), John Constable (1776-1837), Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (1796-1875), Gustave Courbet (1819-1877) and Edgar Degas (1834-1917).¹³⁹ Artists working within this tradition are concerned with the imaging of empirical facts as opposed to idealised representations of reality. As the viewer engages with Freud's nudes their own, fleshy, bodily experience is recalled. Freud depicts the effects of internal bodily forces upon the body's surface and in doing so recalls a shared bodily sensation. In depicting heavy, sagging and tactile qualities within unidealised nude figures Freud simultaneously connects the viewer's perception of the body and alludes to the animality inherent within the human condition. The reclining positions of the subjects, the evocation of flesh and the primacy of the genitalia all serve to highlight the subject as an animal. This relationship is made more apparent through the introduction of a reclining dog alongside the nude in *Sunday Morning - Eight Legs* (1997) [Fig.41], and made explicit in *Naked Girl with Eggs* (1980-81) [Fig.42], where the placement of two eggs recalls the female subject's reproductive system.

The act of painting, in allowing the tactile qualities of the medium to speak, plays a significant role in achieving a connection between the artist's corporeal experience, the image and the echo of this experience in the viewer's perception of the work. In Freud's painting *Naked Girl* (1966) [Fig.43] the visible thick brushstrokes denoting a highlight on the girl's left forearm evoke the sensation of the artist's bodily movements enacted while grasping for form upon the canvas: "Line becomes shape becomes volume in a dance of ambiguity that nevertheless feels...sincerely truthful."¹⁴⁰ Freud used of materiality of paint to synthesise the substance of flesh, and it is through the convergence of the artist's movements within the descriptive brushstroke that the experience and sensation of perceiving the subject, and the complexities of their flesh, is

¹³⁸ Freud stated that he was "really interested in people as animals" Smee, Sebastian, and Freud Lucian. *Lucian Freud: Beholding the Animal*. (Hong Kong ; London : Taschen, 2011), 61.

¹³⁹ Smee and Freud. *Lucian Freud: Beholding the Animal*, 31

¹⁴⁰ Smee and Freud. *Lucian Freud: Beholding the Animal.*, 26

conveyed. The viewer experiences the sensation of Freud's brush gliding across the surface of the canvas just as they feel the straightness, the tight skin stretched over the bone of the forearm.

Fig.43. Lucian Freud, *Naked Girl*, 1966. Oil on canvas, 61 x 61 cm

<http://queue.typepad.com/.a/6a00d8345293e069e2019aff0bd5d970b-800wi>

The British artist Jenny Saville (b.1970) adapts Freud's presentations of the nude through the exaggeration and distortion of the human form. Through the incorporation of expressive elements into representations of flesh and skin Saville alludes to social and political issues surrounding depictions of the female form.¹⁴¹ Saville primarily uses photographs as source material and in doing so she demonstrates that photographically derived imagery can be effectively utilised to convey corporeal experiences of a tactile reality, as her images engender a similar flesh-like visuality to Freud's work. She uses a palette that closely resembles the hues and tones found on the body in nature, however, these colours are exaggerated to express bodily discomfort and, at times bodily horror [Fig.44]. The chromatic distortions retain a perceptual link to the body through their placement on the body and through a link to the skin's natural colouring.¹⁴² However Saville exaggerates colours in order to enact the colour's expressive capacities constituted within bodily experience. For example, a red may become so saturated, so vibrant, that it recalls visual experiences of raw flesh or of bloody, burnt or damaged skin [Fig.45]; in Saville's paintings red can, therefore, produce uncomfortable and horrific sensations or experiences within the viewer.

My artworks also incorporate an element of colourific exaggeration, whereas Saville uses colour to engender violence, discomfort and horror my work utilises colour to accentuate the myriad colours visible when scrutinising the facial surface. In every square centimetre of skin there is an array of colours, forms and shades interacting and contradicting each one another. Steven Connor (b.1955) acknowledges this chromatic complexity in *The Book of Skin* (2004) where he asserts that the skin does not have a fixed, discernible colour.¹⁴³ Layers and lines of reds, yellows, blues, greens and purples all overlap and alter the appearance and tone of adjacent hues. This is not a static process, the body constantly adapts to its surroundings both externally and internally,

¹⁴¹ Saville's political and social commentary, surrounding depictions of the female form is of limited value to this research project, which seeks to avoid the physiognomic reading of gender within the image. For a more detailed account of Saville's social and political content see: Michelle Meagher, "Jenny Saville and a Feminist Aesthetics of Disgust" *Hypatia* 18, no.4 (November, 2003): 23-42; and Alison Rowley, "On Viewing Three Paintings by Jenny Saville: Rethinking a Feminist Practice of Painting," in: Griselda Pollock, *Generations and Geographies in the Visual Art: Feminist Readings*. (London Routledge, 1996), 88-109

¹⁴² It is worth mentioning that she frequently uses her own body as a figure for her artworks. It is primarily for this reason that her paintings centres on the evocation of white, northern European skin tones.

¹⁴³ Steven Connor, *The Book of Skin*. (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), 147-177.

resulting in a constant flux. The thickness of the skin, its elasticity, the weight of flesh, temperature, emotional disposition, states of excretion all impact on the perceivable colours of the bodily surface. The exaggeration of colour in my artworks is intended to highlight this spectrum, as far as possible, within a static image. To achieve this enhancement of natural states of colour the images could not be over saturated as this would result in the loss of bodily connection between the image and the viewer. As in Saville's work, the colours utilised in my artworks maintain a bodily frame of reference in order to effectively convince the viewer of their veracity.

Fig.44. Jenny Saville, *Fulcrum*, 1997-99. Oil on canvas, 261.6 x 487.7 cm

http://www.saatchigallery.com/imgs/artists/aip_e_artist_jenny_saville/jenny_saville_2.jpg

Fig.45. Jenny Saville, *Red Stare Head II*, 2007-11. Oil on canvas, 270 x 220 cm

<https://www.artsy.net/artwork/jenny-saville-red-stare-head-iv>

9. Scopophilis: physical pleasure in looking

The encounter with human skin and flesh evoked in Freud's and Saville's works can be seen as enacting, or distorting, what Sigmund Freud described as scopophilis.¹⁴⁴ Scopophilis describes how the pleasures of looking at a naked human body become linked with a sense of tactile experience, sight and corporeality coming together in a field of desire.¹⁴⁵ This concept is similar to both the haptic notion of seeing and to Merleau-Ponty's account of corporeal perception; however Sigmund Freud's concept incorporates an additional psychological and desirous element to the union of sight and touch.

Although it may seem incongruous to state that the images produced for this research project have a similar psycho-sexual element enacted within them, there is, however, a discernible element of scopophilis present with the viewing of these works. These images present a human encounter in such closeness as to allow a sustained level of visual intimacy with the subject that is not permissible in the majority of human interaction. It is only in extremely intimate situations that someone would be close enough to another human's face that they would be able to study the minutia of the facial surface. Generally speaking, the only situations where someone would be close enough to scrutinise a living person's face in such detail would be during sexual coupling, when kissing, or when contemplating the surface of a loved one's face.¹⁴⁶ In allowing a prolonged visual engagement with the face these images recall a bodily experience of closeness and in doing so enact an element of Freud's scopophilis.

10. The hybridisation of Photorealism with haptic body imaging

This research project unites the fidelity and theoretical aspects of Photorealism with a European realist tradition in order to best convey the experience of engaging with another person's facial

¹⁴⁴ Derived from the Greek *scopophilia*, meaning love of looking

¹⁴⁵ Mellor, David, and Freud Lucian. *Interpreting Lucian Freud*. (London: Tate Publishing, 2002), 10. For the original concept see: Sigmund Freud and Richards, Angela ed., *On Sexuality: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works*, trans. Strachey, James. (Hammondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977). 69-70

¹⁴⁶ This latter example of intimate contact with another's face also applies to the non-sexualised gaze of a parent lovingly scrutinising their child's features, an experience potentially echoed with the painting *Face IX* [Fig53].

features. The Photorealists had initially made images derivative of the modernist movement that had sought to distinguish depictions of reality from the weight of an art history dominated by representational imagery. The Photorealists chose to use photographic imagery to detach the image from its referent and disrupt the Platonic object/copy hierarchy. They produced images of the everyday and mundane as an alternative mode of figurative art distinct from the traditions, techniques, tropes and stereotypes of naturalistic painting. The twentieth century European realists also painted the mundane, however, they continued to work within a tradition that relied upon and engendered sensation produced through a direct subjective, perceptual, corporeal engagement with the world. This engagement is enacted and perceivable within the act of painting itself, which serves to connect the artist's experience, via the image, to the viewer. The following chapter will demonstrate how this union is enacted, analysed, experimented with and developed within the artworks produced for this research project.

Chapter Four

Methods and Materials

The conceptual framework for facial imaging removes the conventional portrait schema and impedes physiognomic interpretations of the face. To enhance the veracity of the work it was decided that an abundance of visual information would be incorporated into the compositional design in order to effectively recall experiences and sensations generating through the contemplation of the human face. An extreme level of detail enacts Superrealist strategies that serve to disrupt the platonic image/object relationship and inhibit communicative aspects of the image. In inhibiting the links between the image and the referent, the meaning of the face as a signifier of a depicted individual is disrupted and this, therefore, allows for a greater freedom of interpretation.

This chapter will show how the conceptual framework was given form and assess the success and failures of this approach to facial imaging. The experiments conducted will be detailed and an analysis of the ways in which changes to the compositional format, source material, image acquisition, scale and paint application affect the facial image will be given. Each of the facial studies will be dealt separately with various elements of the work differentiated to allow for an ease of comparison and reference.

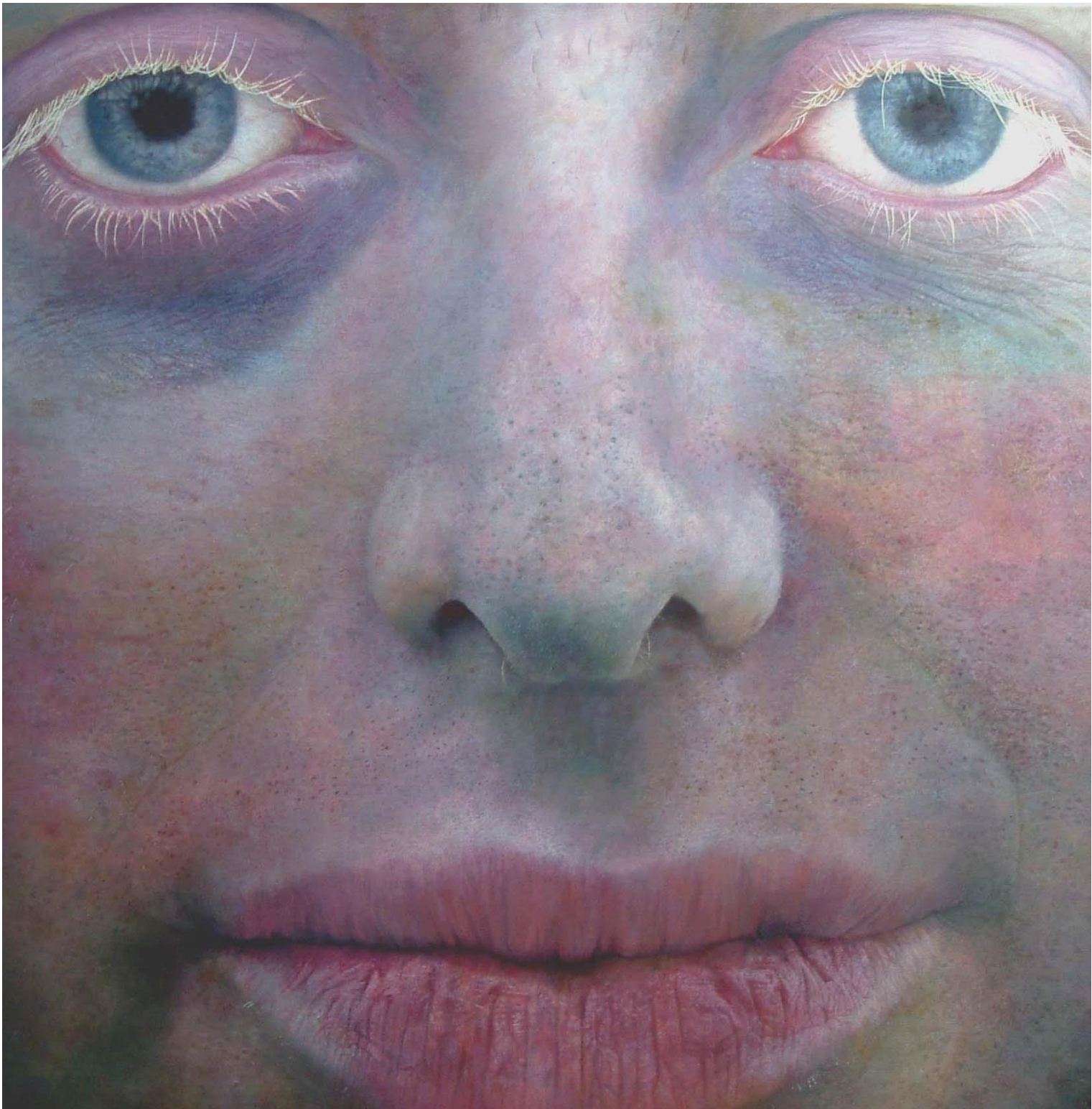


Fig.46. Michael Roberts. *Face I*, 2005. Oil on canvas, 90 x 90cm

1. *Face I* [Fig.46]

1.1. The Collection of Visual Data

1.1.1. Choice of Model

Before conducting any photographic documentation of the facial surface it was necessary to choose a model to provide the raw visual data. The criteria of choice for a model revolved chiefly around the square compositional format. Following conventional monumental images depicting humanity in general, a normative example of a face was required.¹⁴⁷ The model would therefore have to possess a reasonably symmetrical face, containing two eyes, a nose and a mouth that would, ideally, fit neatly into a square frame. Any deviations from this criterion would disrupt the symmetry and balance of the compositional format.

A second criterion was that the model should be without any extreme facial details; again this fits in to the normative idea of a generalised, or aggregate, human facial form. Any extreme blemishes, scars or disfigurements that could potentially engage the viewer's attention over less visually interesting areas of the facial/picture surface were, therefore, avoided. Another reason for utilising a model without any distinct or visually interesting facial details was that the inclusion of derivative details could potentially disrupt the required anonymity of the subject, as any strikingly idiosyncratic features could allow the sitter to be identified. For example, if a model had a large scar, of a distinctive shape, on their cheek this could act as an indexical sign directly referencing the subject. Mundane rather than interesting surface data was, therefore, a principle criterion when choosing a model for this initial study.

The first subject chosen was a fair skinned male in his late twenties [Fig. Fair skin is, generally, more translucent than darker skin and allows for a wide ranging palette. When analysing the

¹⁴⁷ By normative I in no way wish to aver what is and what is not normal, it is simply that an aggregate human facial form consists of a certain quantity and arrangement of features.

subject pale blues were visible in areas of thin skin, while in denser areas reds, oranges and yellows could be discerned. The choice of a subject in his late twenties is consistent with the models used in the idealised, generalised, human forms found in antiquity. In conventional idealised images a subject would not be very old nor particularly young and would possess a smooth bodily surface that displayed limited signs of age or weathering. In choosing this model and then displaying the intricacies and variety of the facial surface at close range, this initial painting revealed the smooth flawless surface, conventionally associated with the young skin, to be a fallacy.

1.1.2. Lighting

The first photographic session was undertaken indoors on a clear day, with natural daylight as the primary light source and additional illumination provided by an overhead strip-light. After a series of light testing photographs it was decided that the sitter would sit with their back to the window in order to avoid any extremes of shadow or light and to avoid the photographer's shadow being cast over them. Low contrast illumination worked in synergy with the square design as heavily shadowed features could disrupt the overall symmetry of the compositional design. Heavy shadowing would also imply something external to the image/facial surface, which would work against the image being a self-contained entity lacking in reference to anything other than itself. The even lighting also allowed for a consistent intensity of detail throughout the photographs, and therefore within the final painting.

1.1.3. Photography

A digital camera was chosen to take these initial photographs. A digital camera was chosen over a film based device as a digital camera allowed for a far quicker analysis and selection of images, with images appearing immediately on the screen for appraisal. The camera was mounted on a tripod in order to stabilise the device, the tripod being an essential tool when attempting close-up shots where the slightest of movements can obscure the data. The initial photographs were taken at approximately one meter from the subject and this initial photographic phase yielded a number of full face images that were roughly aligned to the square compositional format.

The second phase of photographs went closer to the subject, at approximately ten centimeters. The camera was moved, systematically across the face, starting with the upper right eye and moving from left to right, top to bottom, finishing at the bottom of the left cheek of the model's face. Many photographs were taken throughout this phase in order to document each feature in as much detail as possible. A third phase repeated this systematic route, only this time closer to the model, at two to three centimeters, in order to obtain images of a greater magnification and detail.

A number of photographs were obtained through the use of a film-based camera, a Pentax K1000, with a 50mm macro lens. The images produced using this method proved unreliable as many of the photographs were out of focus or distorted when they returned from the developers. Close-up photographs are easily blurred as the slightest of movements, or adjustments in focus, can completely alter the content and quality of an image. This experiment reinforced the need for the instantaneous results provided by the digital camera.

It was necessary to recall the model back for further photographic sessions as some of the initial images did not have sufficient visual data or were not of sufficient quality to be of use in the painting. The lack of necessary detail within an image, generally, did not become apparent until the later transpositional stages, where the source material would be subjected to an increased level of scrutiny.

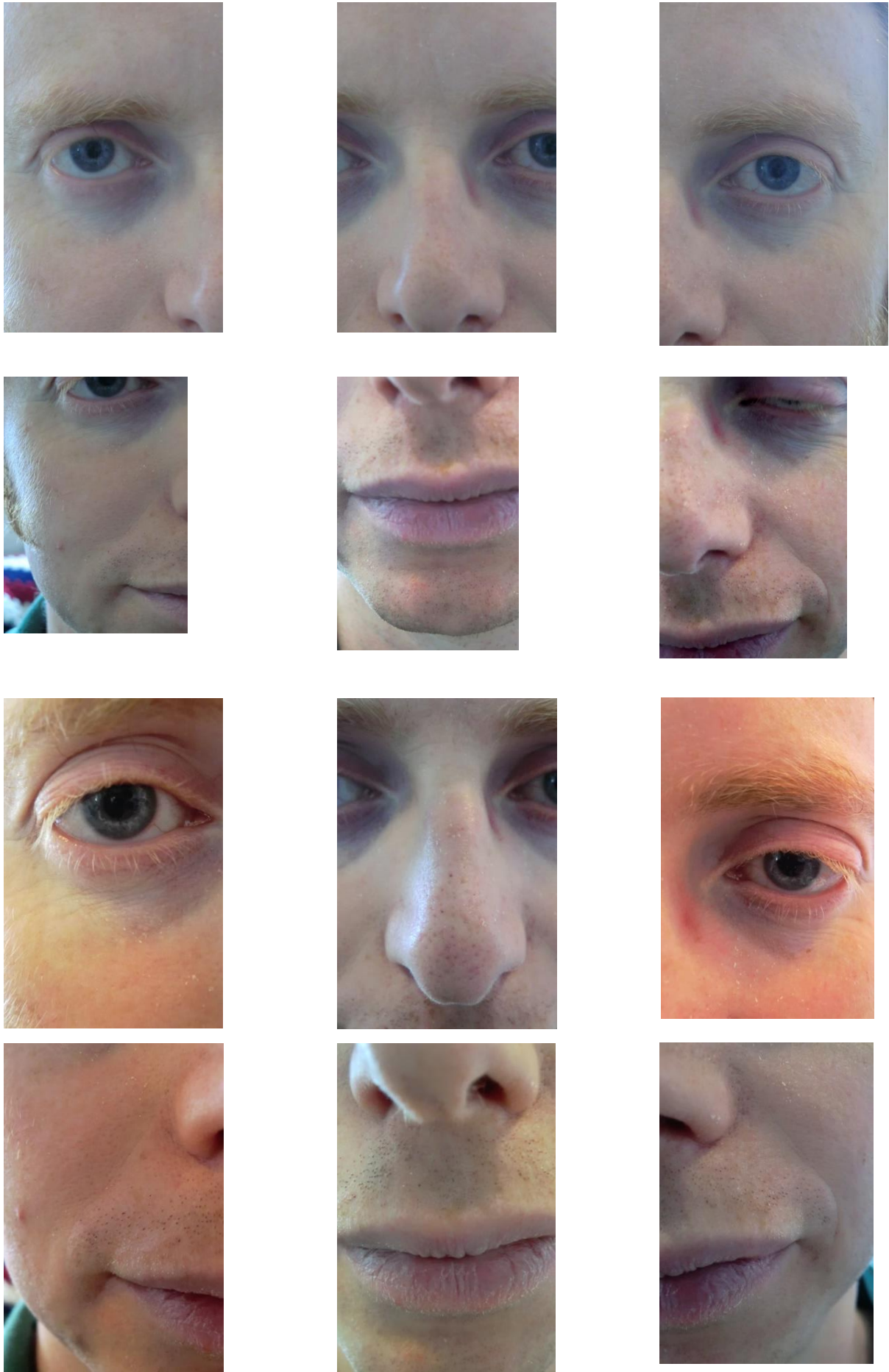


Fig.47. A selection of images demonstrating the photographic procedure for *Face I*

1.2. Image selection, cataloguing and manipulation

Once a mass of photographic data had been obtained from the first photographic session each photograph was analysed for its usefulness. The images with sufficient visual information, where the subject's facial surface was clearly visible and in focus were labeled according to which facial element they represented and their relative position. For example, titles such as "Upper Left Eye 1" or "Left Cheek Lower Right" would be used to pinpoint exactly what facial element an image referred to. This labeling was necessary as within extremely close-up images of flesh it can be difficult to discern what a particular image shows. It was therefore necessary, for the subsequent transposition process, that amorphous areas of flesh be correctly identified and labeled as soon as possible after the photographic stage. Time was an imperative as memories of the subject's facial surface would still be fresh and this could aid the identification of the photographic images.

1.2.1. The Compositional Image

The compositional format was dictated by the internal facial elements. As this was the first image to implement the compositional design there was no experimentation or deviation from the square compositional format required; at this stage it was sufficient for the image to implement the design in order to see if the conceptual framework underpinning the composition would be a success. Therefore, a single full-face photographic image, that had been captured in photographic phase one, was selected to provide the basis for the painting. This image was uploaded on to a computer and digitally cropped into a square format [Figs.48-49].¹⁴⁸ The corners of the eyes provided the vertical boundaries, while the tops of the eyelids and the bottom of the mouth formed the horizontal parameters.

¹⁴⁸ Using Adobe Photoshop 7

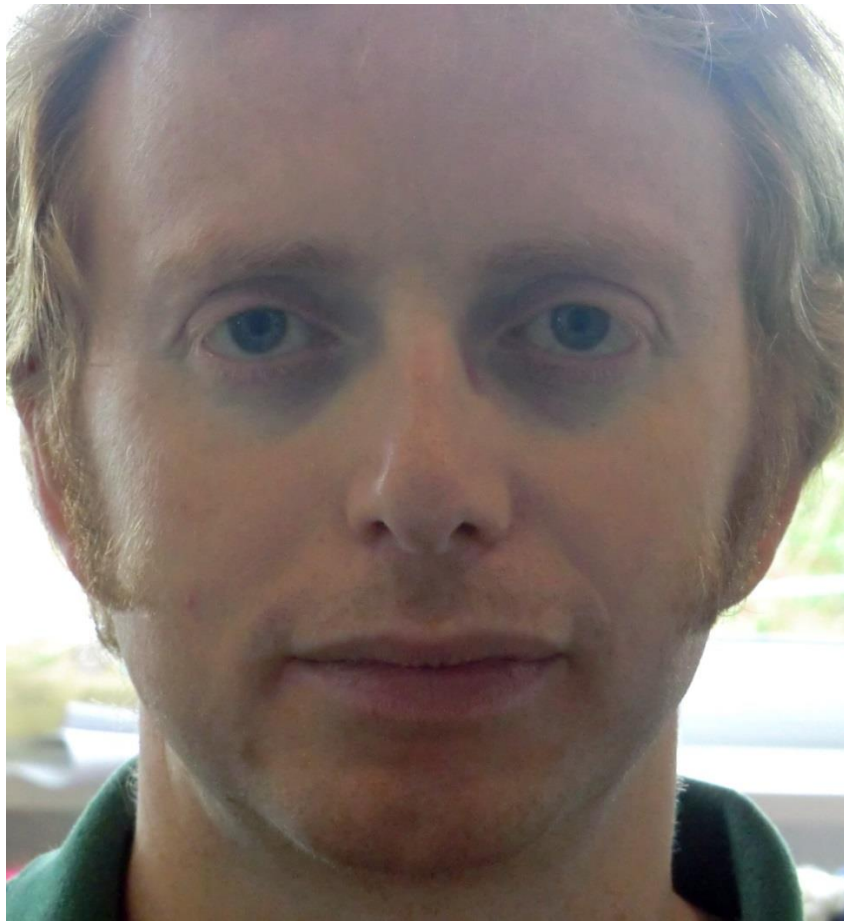


Fig.48. Full face photograph, from which the compositional image was produced

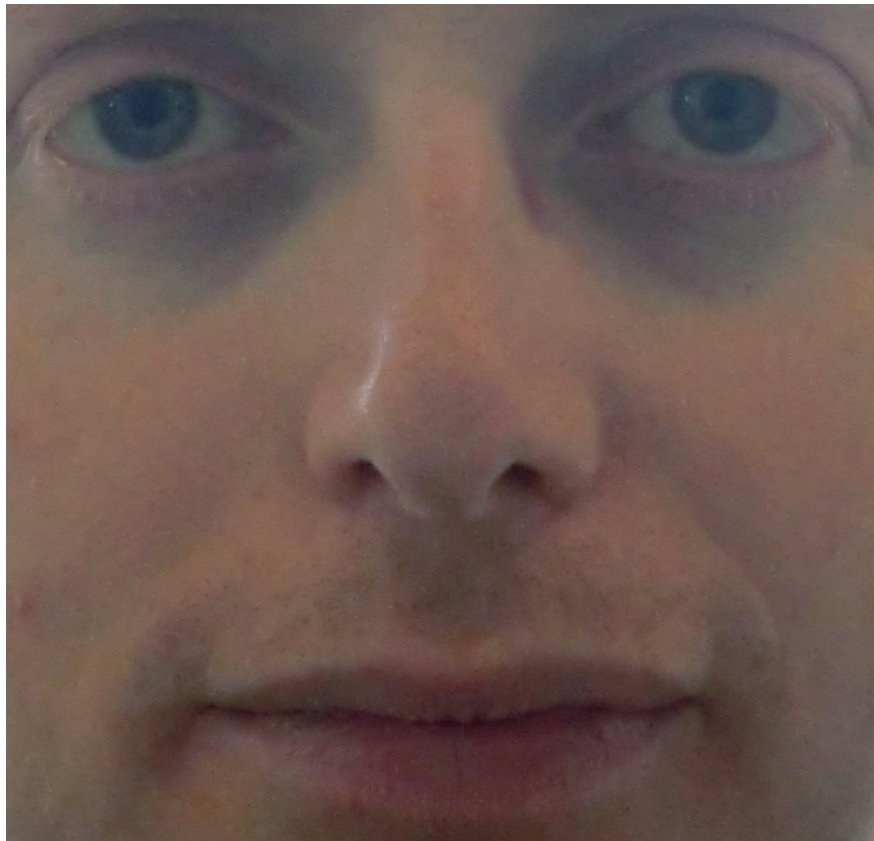


Fig.49. Full face photograph cropped into the compositional format

1.2.2. Analysis and manipulation of Surface Details

The close-up images, obtained during photographic phases two and three, were also digitally processed with adjustments to hue, saturation, brightness and contrast being made. Often a single image would be altered and saved in a number of different states of brightness, contrast and colourisation in order to provide clarity and enhance the content of the images [Figs.50-51]. Photographs would be darkened, so that certain details within highlighted areas could be made apparent, or brightened to reveal previously indistinct features within the shadows. Contrast was increased to provide better delineation between the minute elements of the facial surface. Within each of the close-up images various saturation levels were experimented with order to enhance the existing colours discernible on and beneath the subject's skin. These variations were then selected, labeled and would be utilised during in the subsequent transpositional stage.

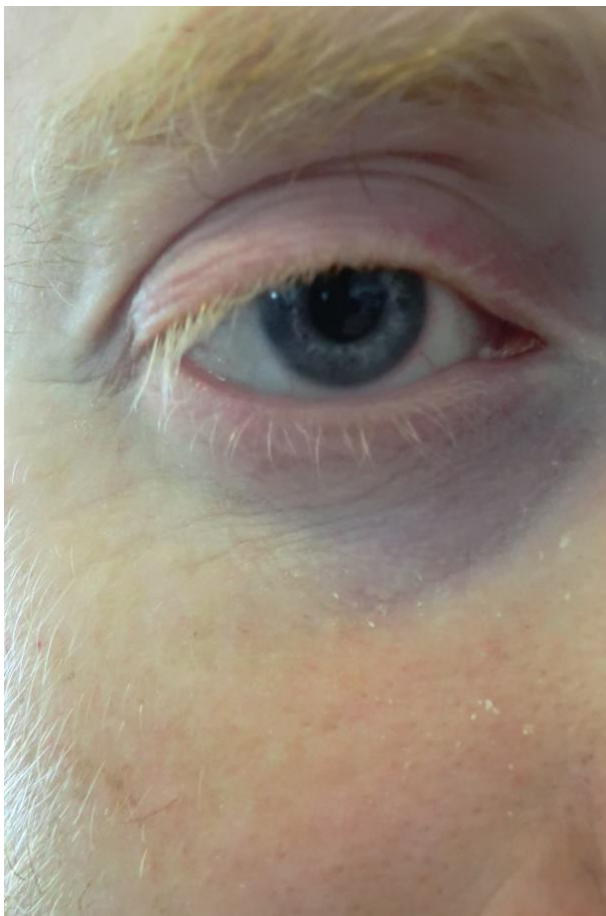


Fig.50. Right eye, original photograph

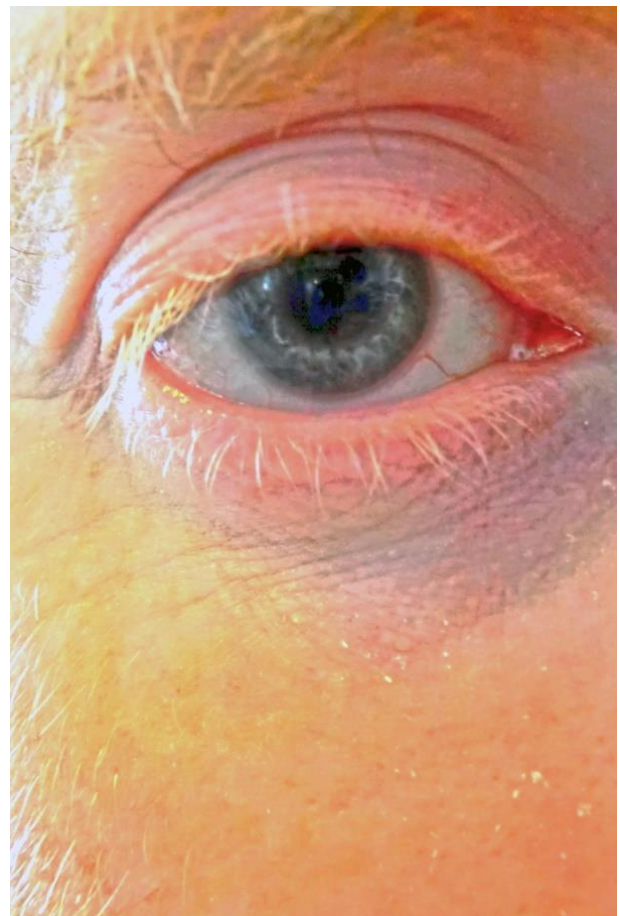


Fig.51. Right eye, manipulated to enhance contrast and accentuate yellows and purples

1.3. Support and Surface Production

1.3.1. Scale and Size

The scale of the image dictated the size of the image. A size of the 90 x 90cm, nine times life size, was felt to be of an adequate size to display enough of the close-up surface details captured during the second and third photographic phases. This size meant that a fine line of paint made by a 000 size sable paint brush could proportionately represent a wrinkle, or, with a dense quantity of paint, a raised area of flesh.

1.3.2. The Support

A 90 x 90cm wooden frame was produced onto which a suitably sized sheet of cotton canvas was stretched and stapled in to place.

1.3.3 Priming

The priming process was derived from Chuck Close's methodologies. Close would use acrylic gesso primer to coat his canvases, with up to fifteen coats of primer being used on any one painting. Each coat was sanded once dry, initially with a relatively course paper and progressing to a very fine grain, in order to achieve a flat surface so that the weave of the material was nullified.¹⁴⁹ These flat, smooth surfaces achieved a uniformity of surface that provided a neutral starting point; a flat surface onto which any application of paint would be raised higher than the primed surface and would, therefore, facilitate haptic viewing.

1.4. The Transposition of the Photographs to the Canvas

1.4.1. First Transpositional Stage: The Delineation of Composition Features

¹⁴⁹ Storr, *Chuck Close*, 43

The initial transpositional stage involved printing an 18cm version of the cropped full-face photographic image, and then drawing a grid of 1cm squares over the image. A corresponding grid was drawn on to the prepared canvas, with each square measuring 5cm. The locations of the main facial features were roughly drawn on the canvas, as well as any readily seen moles, blemishes or hairs.

1.4.2. Second Transpositional Stage: Chromatic Underpainting

The primary objective of this project was to replicate the sensations produced when engaging with and contemplating the human facial surface, a fundamental catalyst in achieving this evocation is visual proximity between paint and flesh. The colours of the body are in a constant state of flux, they change according to mood, temperature and activity. Bodily colours also alter with sustained viewing as a lengthy analysis of the surface reveals a greater number of colours and shades as the eye become familiar with the minutia of the surface. In order to give a sense of this fluctuating spectrum, as an aid to the evocation of bodily sensations, it was decided that the existing colours discernible in the facial region should be subtly exaggerated. Glazes of unmixed colours were, therefore, applied across the primed surface. This initial colourisation would penetrate through subsequent, naturalistic, flesh tones allowing for subtle chromatic shifts to occur within the image. The colours used in this stage were based on the colours identified within the subject when studied from life, the colours present within the full face photograph and from the colours obtained from the digitally manipulated close-up images. A mixture of one part paint to one part white spirit was produced to apply the chromatic glazes.¹⁵⁰ The thinness of the paint allows the underlying grid and drawing to remain clearly visible. White spirit was chosen above turpentine as the latter tends to leave a chalky white residue upon the dried paint.

During this under painting stage the basic principles of colour theory were adhered to. Cold colours, such as blues, greens and violets produce short wavelengths on the visual spectrum and

¹⁵⁰ Throughout this project Michael Harding's Handmade Artists' Oil Colours were used. These are paints of extremely good quality, with a high pigment content that produce powerful, rich, colours.

appear to recede; therefore, cold colours were used to add a sense of depth to shadowed areas. Whereas, warm colours - reds, oranges and yellows - that are at the opposite end of the visual spectrum, were used to bring forward certain areas of the image.¹⁵¹ Colour harmonies were also employed with dark areas subtly shifting between an array of blues, greens and purple while lighter areas contained more reds, oranges and yellows.¹⁵²

To apply the underpainting large sable brushes (sizes 4-6) were used to fill in wide areas of the canvas. These expanses of colour, across large sections of the image, granted the painting an overall consistency. It was a concern that the concentration on individual sections of the face, in the transcription of the photographs into paint, could have resulted in the image appearing fragmented. The colourific underpainting utilised complementary colours to add an underlying unity across the canvas, so that the darkest darks would have a shade of ultramarine underlying them while the lightest lights would have a tint of cadmium orange; in other areas large red areas were be sharply contrasted against green shadowy expanses. The chromatic underpainting, therefore, provided a unifying element throughout the painting that served to connect the fractious parts through shared colour traits.

The underpainting also worked as a means to display the colourific elements that exist beneath the skin's surface. Although it is not the remit of this project to provide an explanation of how the skin functions a brief account of how the visual properties of the surface get their appearance can help explain the use of the chromatic underpainting throughout these facial studies. The skin reflects more red light than blue light, while partially visible veins absorb both blue and red light and reflect less light back, veins therefore appear darker. The veins appear blue as they absorb more red light than blue light, and they therefore take on a purple shade. Colour perception makes the veins purple colour appear blue as they are situated next to the redder surface colour, in perceiving the differences between the two colours the brain sees the purple shade as bluer than it actually is. This effect is more pronounced in lighter skinned subjects than in people with

¹⁵¹ For a detailed description of the visual spectrum see: Jan J Koenderink and Andrea J. van Doorn, "Perspectives on Colour Space," in Raner Mausfeld and Dieter Heyer eds., *Colour Perception: Mind and the physical world* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 14-15; and Luigina de Grandis, *Theory and Use of Colour*, trans. John Gilbert (Poole: Blandford Press, 1986), 146.

¹⁵² For an outline of various theories of colour harmonies see: Luigina de Grandis, *Theory and Use of Colour*, 151.

darker skin as lower quantities of melanin in the skin absorb less light and, therefore, reflect more colours; lighter skin also allows more light to penetrate its surface allowing a greater illumination of subsurface material.



Fig.52. *Face VI* (detail). Image showing the outlined facial areas and the initial underpainting.¹⁵³



¹⁵³ This is not of *Face I*; it is regrettable that no images of *Face I* in progress exist.

Fig.53. Face VI (detail). Image showing all the phases of the painting, at different stages, throughout the painting.

Initially only three primary colours were used in the underpainting process. Yellow ochre, a muddy yellow ideal for underpainting highlights; alizarin crimson, a rich red that approximates blood effectively and which "portraitists have greatly prized its range of cool, rather smoky hues, so well suited for rendering facial flesh."¹⁵⁴ Ultramarine blue, a midrange blue, was largely used in defining areas of shadow. The limitation of colour was reconsidered early in the project as a limited palette resulted in a greater necessity to mix the colours. Mixing colours can result in a deadening, or muddying of secondary or tertiary colours and this affected the vibrancy of the chromatic underpainting. It was, therefore, decided that a wide-ranging palette would be used throughout the painting process.

The chromatic underpainting was utilised in the iris but not in the whites of the eyes. An underpainting for the pupil was painted in ultramarine. The iris was sketchily delineated, again using ultramarine, chosen as an undertone because of the blue hue of this model's eyes.

1.4.3. Third Transpositional Stage: The Naturalistic Layer

Following the outlining of the main facial features and underpainting the detail of the surface was built up. A number of close-up images of a single facial area were printed out and cross-referenced with the gridded underdrawing. The details present within the photograph were then painted into the appropriate region, with each minute detail receiving the same level of scrutiny and delineation as possible. This transpositional system allowed each line, pore, blemish, mole and hair to be accurately situated within the large scale painting and allowed the canvas to have an all-over compositional quality where each area of the skin was as detailed as all the others. The grid continued to be useful in isolating elements and allowing for an increased level of precision when transposing the colours and forms from the photographic images into paint. The segmentation of the picture surface also allowed for work to be concentrated into small

¹⁵⁴ Harding, Michael. "Colour Chart: Alizarin Crimson" *Michael Harding: Handmade Artists Oil Colours*. Michael Harding, 2004, first accessed 2004. <http://www.michaelharding.co.uk/colour-info.php?cID=98>

restricted areas across the image. In restricting the area of work to very small areas the details of the face were abstracted and this abstraction facilitated the precisionist transpositional approach. When a picture is abstracted an artist is free to concentrate on the formal properties of the image - the colours, shapes and tones - this facilitates a mode of representation that is freed from conceptions of what an object should look like that interfere with the mimetic transpositions. An abstraction of the surface details, therefore, enhanced the analysis and transposition of the photographic images.

The third painting stage saw an application of a naturalistic paint formula applied over the chromatic underpainting. The basic skin tone formula consisted of equal parts of cobalt violet and lemon yellow mixed with varied quantities of sun-thickened linseed oil.¹⁵⁵ The ratio of colours would vary according to the redness or yellowness of a particular area of skin. To this basic mixture a limited amount of cremnitz or zinc white was added to desaturate, naturalise, and add substance, to the paint.

Flesh is full of visual contradictions, it can be soft/hard, thick/thin, transparent/opaque. In an attempt to synthesis these disparate aspects two types of white paint were employed in order to achieve a balance that would allow the chromatic underpainting to radiate through successive layers, while simultaneously depicting a dense fleshy substance. To achieve this equilibrium zinc white was employed; the paint manufacturer Michael Harding describes zinc white as: "[having] a cool transparency and a subtle power enabling one to create slightly hued mixes which retain their chromatic intensity and brightness."¹⁵⁶ Cremnitz white provides: "the ideal white for

¹⁵⁵ Sun-thickened linseed oil is produced by leaving a quantity of linseed oil in a metal dish with a glass lid covering it and placing it in direct sunlight. The oil should be whisked every two days until a desired consistency is reached. The sun-thickened oil is a thick medium that allows for subtle control in colour applications and is especially useful for building up glazes, for a detailed of the recipe see: Harding, Michael. "Painting Mediums and Recipes: Sun Thickened Linseed Oil" *Michael Harding: Handmade Artists Oil Colours*. Michael Harding, 2004, first accessed 2004. <http://michaelharding.co.uk/paintingmed.php>

¹⁵⁶ Harding, Michael. "Colour Chart: Zinc White" *Michael Harding: Handmade Artists Oil Colours*. Michael Harding, 2004, first accessed 2004. <http://www.michaelharding.co.uk/colour-info.php?cID=77>

furrowed, granular or impasto mark-making."¹⁵⁷ The decision to primarily use cremnitz white as a textural medium was informed through a study of Lucian Freud's rendering of flesh in paint; Freud frequently employed cremnitz white in his paintings of fleshy nudes because of its dense, sculptural qualities.

To enrich dark areas cobalt violet dark, burnt umber and viridian were mixed in to the established flesh formula. While, for lighter areas lemon yellow, yellow ochre, Indian red and cadmium red were incorporate into the formula to brighten and colourise highlighted areas.

The iris was carefully painted with a mixture of ultramarine, yellow ochre and viridian. Occasionally burnt umber was used to desaturate and darken the blue areas. Highlights in the eyes were added through the application of zinc white to the blue/green iris formula. The whites of the eyes were given a subtle wash of yellow ochre and the areas of shadow were filled in with a darker wash consisting of yellow ochre mixed with ultramarine and burnt umber. The veins of the eyes were added by painting thin streaks of alizarin crimson being painted into a thin layer of wet sun-thickened linseed oil, this technique effectively mimicked the viscous qualities of the eye's surface, with the paint subtly bleeding into the oil [Fig. 54].

1.4.4. Forth Transpositional Stage: Highlights

The third and final painting phase added further highlights to the image with an increased amount of zinc white, cremnitz white, lemon yellow and yellow ochre being added to the formula. The additional highlights were used to pick out the way in which the light reflected off of the edges of individual details - the way a point of light illuminated a single side on a raised area of flesh, or the edge of a cavernous pore.

¹⁵⁷ Harding, Michael. "Colour Chart: Cremnitz White No.1 (Linseed Oil):" *Michael Harding: Handmade Artists Oil Colours*. Michael Harding, 2004, first accessed 2004. <http://www.michaelharding.co.uk/colour-info.php?cID=79>

1.4.5. Fifth Transpositional Stage: Adding Hairs

The model was a very fair haired subject so the eyelashes and minute hairs covering the surface of the skin were picked out with a scalpel. The scraping action of the scalpel was a fine, linear scrapping process that was well suited to the task of rendering individual, minute follicles across the surface. The blade removed the layers of pigment from the surface, cutting down to the white primed surface below. A light wash of lemon yellow and yellow ochre was the delicately added to slightly colourise the stark white of the primed surface.

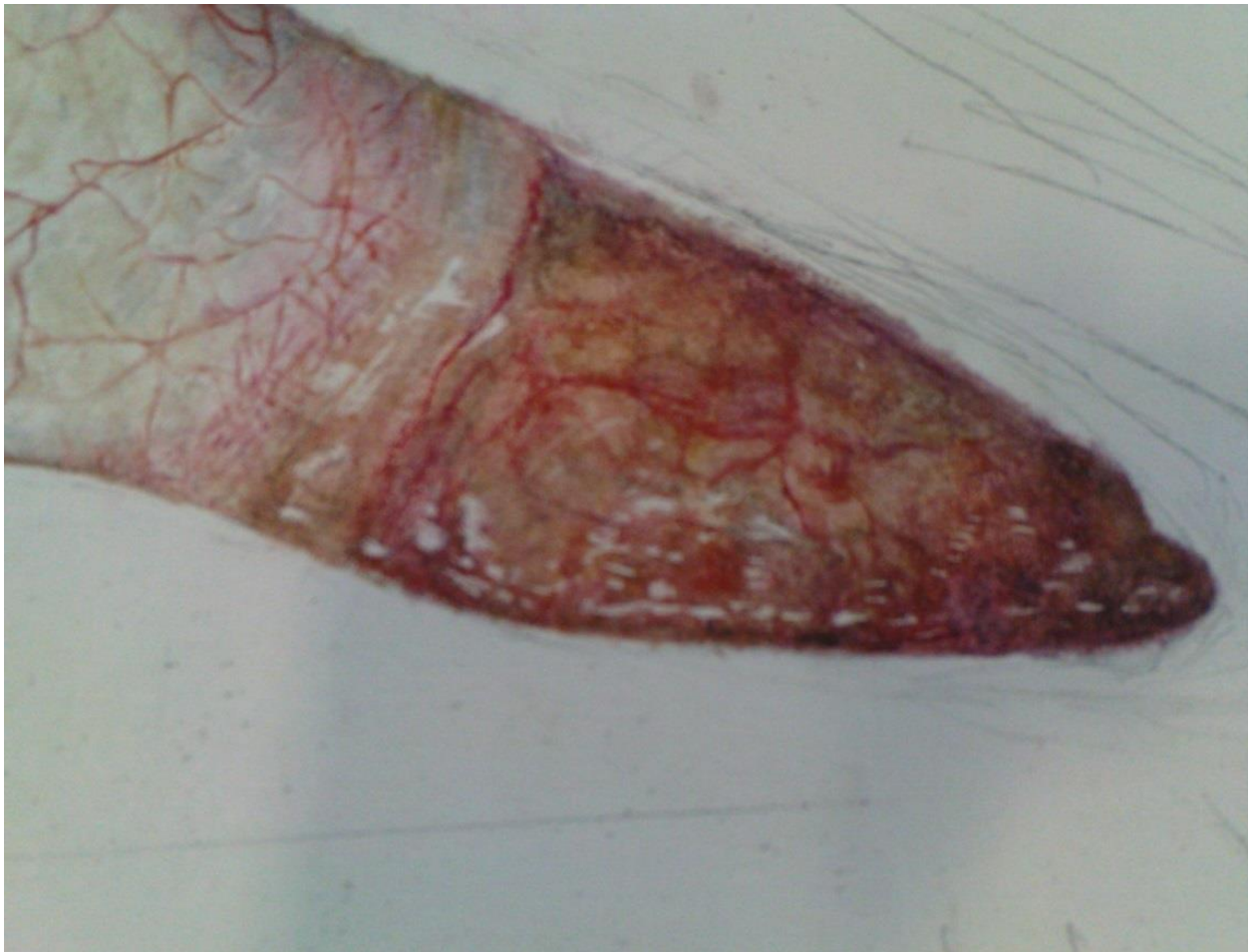


Fig.54. *Face X* (detail). Image detailing the diffusing effects when alizarin crimson and cadmium red paint are applied to a layer of wet sun-thickened linseed oil.

1.5. Conclusions

This initial facial image successfully implemented the theoretical elements in producing a deterritorialised face, freed from the conventions and expectations of facial imaging that are framed by the modern portrait tradition.

The size and scale of the image meant that the viewer's perception of the painting altered according to their proximity to the work. When viewed from a distance the images almost appeared to be photographic reproductions or digitally rendered images. However, as the viewer's proximity to the work altered the density of visual information, and the nature of the painting as a handmade object, became apparent. It is when the viewer is close to the work that the highly detailed, fleshy painting enables a sense of haptic viewing to become engaged, recalling shared experiences of the facial surface as a tactile object and stimulating senses of sight and touch as the surface is considered.

The use of a chromatic underpainting added a unity throughout image and allowed for subtle shifts in colour to be perceived recalling the bodily hues perceivable when scrutinising the facial surface. As the underpainting was successful in alluding to colourific elements beneath the surface of the skin, this technique was used again in subsequent works

It was noted that the use of white paint reduced the vibrancy of the skin formula. The hues took on chalky, pastel tones when either of the white paints were added to the formula, although, this effect was more pronounced with the cremntiz white than the zinc white. As this work aimed to evoke a fleshy paintwork similar to that used by Lucian Freud, who employed cremnitz white to achieve a likeness of paint to flesh, it was felt that the slight bleaching effect was an acceptable compromise at this stage.

These successful elements were carried forward in to the production of the next facial image.

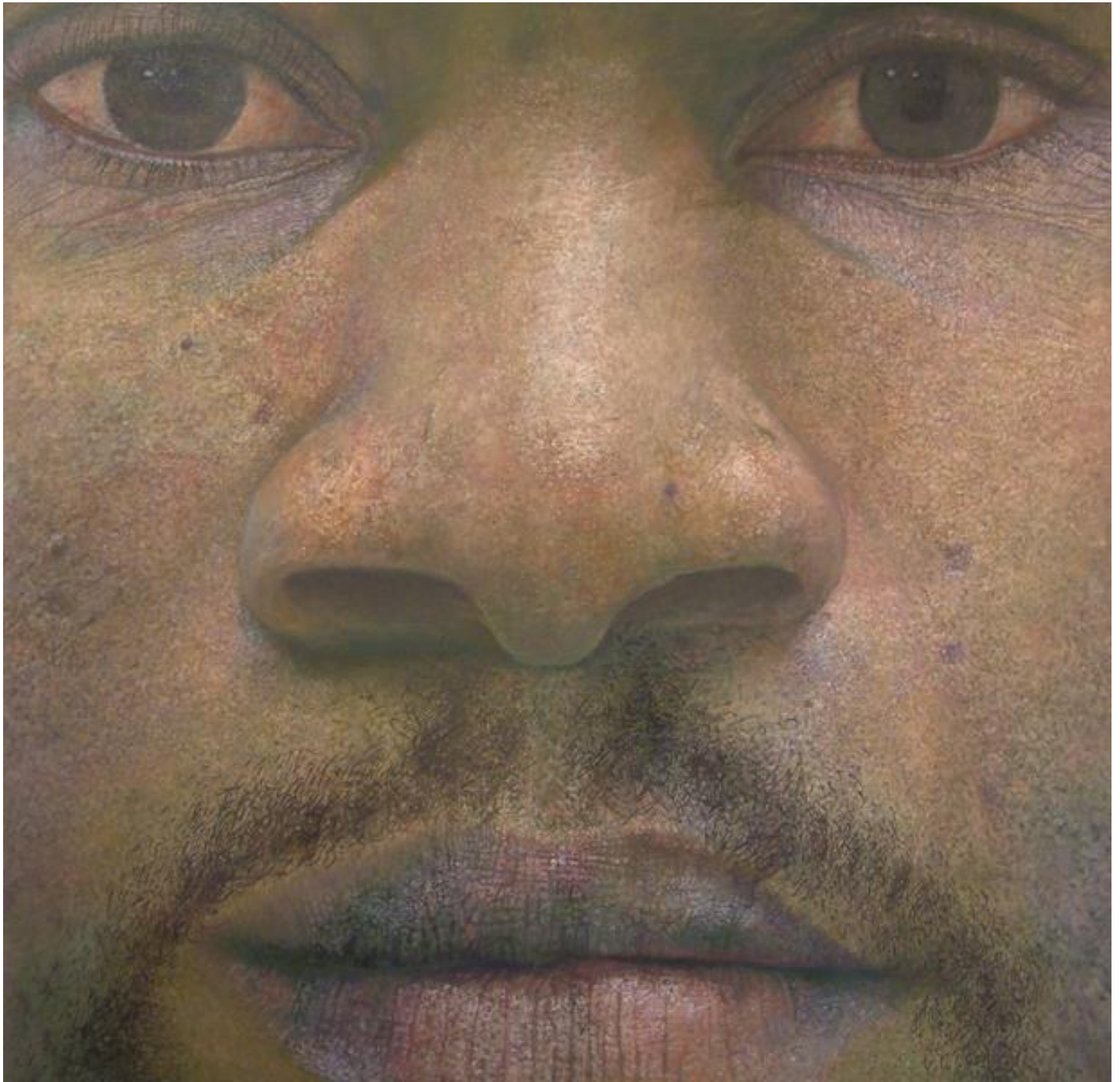


Fig.55. Michael Roberts. *Face II*, 2006. Oil on canvas, 90 x 90 cm.

2. *Face II* [Fig.55]

Face II enacts a similar investigation as the one detailed in the above study. In this piece the format is repeated with variations in palette and paint application applied throughout.

2.1. The Collection of Visual Data

2.1.1. Choice of Model

The model chosen for the second facial study was a dark skinned male in his late twenties. This model provides a different skin type for investigation that would require a different palette and surface rendering. The choice of model also constituted a deviation from conventional idealised, generalised depictions of mankind where smooth white surfaces are commonly used to represent all of humanity.

2.1.2. Lighting

This study emulated the lighting setup carried out in 1.1.1.

2.1.3. Photography

The photographic sessions for this study largely mirrored the method detailed in 1.1.2. However, film based, macro-lens photography was not undertaken as this method had been proven to be an unreliable form of documentation.

2.2. Image Selection, Cataloguing and Manipulation

The same processes detailed in 1.2 were carried out for this piece.

2.2.1. Compositional Images

The square composition had proven to be a success in *Face I*, in that it had successfully implemented the conceptual framework, it was therefore utilised as the basis for this study.

2.2.2. Analysis and Manipulation of Close-up Images

The photographic images for both studies were once again digitally edited and manipulated to achieve a variety of brightness, contrast and saturation as in 1.2.2.

2.3. Support and Surface Preparation

2.3.1. Scale and Size

In order to provide consistency between the images the size and scale of this painting remained the same as in *Face I*, see 1.2.3.

2.3.2. The Support

This work utilised a support measuring 90 x 90cm, see: 1.3.2.

2.3.3. Priming

This study used a smooth white gesso surface, see: 1.3.3.

2.4. The Transposition of the Photographs to the Canvas

2.4.1. First Transpositional Stage: The Delineation of Composition Features

A projector was employed to transfer the compositional full-faced photographic image on to the canvas. The projector provided a very quick means of delineating the basic facial elements on to the primed surfaces. The prepared canvas was positioned upright in an easel and the projector moved to an appropriate distance from the surface, so that the outer edges of the eyes and lower lip touched the edges of the frame. The key features were the quickly delineated using burnt umber acrylic paint.

The grid system used in *Face I* was still utilised again in this study as a means to situate the minutia of the surface within the whole. The grid was adapted somewhat as it was no longer the primary method of transferring the photographic data to the canvas. The squares forming the grid were therefore larger than they had previously been as the need for accuracy within the grid system had diminished.

The change in the visual aspects of the subject's bodily surface for this study resulted in a number of variations on the formulae used in *Face I*. However, certain aspects of the transpositional process remained the same.

2.4.2. Second Transpositional Stage: Chromatic Underpainting

The chromatic underpainting followed the same principles and processes outlined in 1.4.2.

2.4.3. Third Transpositional Stage: Naturalistic Layer

The representation of naturalistic skin tones in this painting required considerable variations on the skin tone formula used in 1.4.2. The dark skin tones of the subject required a greater quantity

of red to be added to the existing skin formula; this was achieved through an increase of alizarin crimson and burnt umber to the existing cobalt violet and lemon yellow formula. Cobalt violet dark came to replace cobalt violet in much of the paint mixing and was used throughout darker, shadowed areas. Cremnitz white was favoured above zinc white as the subject's skin was thicker than the skin of model used in *Face I*; cremnitz white effectively mimics denser skin as it has a greater physical presence than zinc white. Cremnitz white also reduced the translucency of the naturalistic layer, which was consistent with the more opaque skin type.

2.4.4. Forth Transpositional Stage: Highlights

For the highlights and lighter areas of these studies yellow ochre was predominately utilised with yellow lemon and greater quantities of cremnitz white being added for the lightest of areas.

2.4.5. Fifth Transpositional Stage: Adding Hairs

The subject in this piece had black eyelashes and a quantity of facial hair. A fine sable brush (size 000) was used to paint on each individual hair visible in the source photographs. The black paint used in painting the hairs was made from a mixture of equal parts burnt umber and ultramarine.¹⁵⁸

2.5. Conclusions

The change of subject allowed for a change of palette and a variation in paint application. This second study complimented the first by following the same constructive and methodological approaches, with the formal properties of the work changing according to the demands of the raw data.

¹⁵⁸ As the addition of hairs falls in to two categories, light and dark, the process for adding these details in subsequent works continued to employ the processes described in 1.4.5 and 2.4.5. As this stage remains the same in each work the section dealing with the addition of hair, transpositional stage 5, will be omitted from the following descriptions of production.

The model's beard was felt to be too much of a signifying element within the work as it classified the model as a male. As this project aims to avoid any socially constructed interpretations of the subject it was felt that the inclusion of facial hair attributed a gender to the model and this would in turn could potentially enable physiognomic classifications and interpretations of the subject. It was therefore felt that any facial hair that overtly signified the sex of the subject should be avoided in future studies.



Fig.56. Michael Roberts, *Face III*, 2006. Oil on Canvas, 90 x 90 cm.

3. *Face III* [Fig.56]

This painting continues to utilise the compositional schema to explore the physicality of skin. This image alters the formal components of the image introducing new skin tones and continues to investigate tactile paint applications.

3.1. The Collection of Visual Data

3.1.1. Choice of Model

The model for *Face III* was a dark skinned female, in her late twenties. This subject's skin tones were not as dark or as opaque as the model used for the second facial study. The subject for this third painting would provide a further array of colours and tones, requiring a different variation on the palettes that were used in the first two studies.

3.1.2. Lighting

This study emulated the lighting setup carried out in 1.1.2.

3.1.3. Photography

The photographic stage enacted practices established in 2.1.3

3.2. Image Selection, Cataloguing and Manipulation

The same processes detailed in 1.2 was carried out for this piece

3.2.1. The Composition Image

This study continued to use the square format outlined in 1.2.1. The repetition of this design provided a consistency between the paintings and a simplicity of design that serves to highlight the differences in the subjects' visual properties in synergy with the formal qualities of the works.

The model for this piece had a thinner jaw width than the previous subjects and this resulted in two black areas appearing in the two bottom hand corners of the compositional image, areas that were subsequently carried into the final painting. The black areas occurred in the space where the facial area finished and the background became visible. These areas were left in the work to see what effect they would have in the final, complete painting

3.2.2. Analysis and Manipulation of Close-up Images

The photographic images for both studies were once again digitally edited and manipulated to achieve a variety of brightness, contrast and saturation as in 1.2.2.

3.3. Support and Surface Preparation

3.3.1. Scale and Size

In order to provide consistency between the images the size and scale of this painting remained the same as in *Face I* and *Face II*, see 1.2.3

3.3.2. The Support

This work utilised a support measuring 90 x 90cm, see: 1.3.2.

3.3.3. Priming

This study used a smooth white gesso surface, see: 1.3.3.

3.4. The Transposition of the Photographs to the Canvas

3.4.1. First Transpositional Stage: The Delineation of Composition Features

A combination of the projection and gridding methods were used to transfer the main facial features from the photograph to the canvas, described in 2.4.1

3.4.2. Second Transpositional Stage: Chromatic Underpainting

The chromatic underpainting followed the same principles and processes outlined in 1.4.2.

3.4.3. Third Transpositional Stage: Naturalistic Layer

The skin tone of *Face III* required a greater consistency of yellow ochre and increased quantities of cobalt violet to be added to the basic flesh formula. Zinc white was used to a greater extent than it had been *Face II* as the subject's facial surface had a greater transparency than the subject of the second study.

3.4.4. Forth Transpositional Stage: Highlights

Highlighting relied on additional yellow ochre, lemon yellow, cremnitz white and zinc white, with the zinc white being used in greater quantities than in the preceding study as this subject's skin was significantly more transparent.

3.5. Conclusions

The minor composition variation in *Face III* was felt to be somewhat detrimental to the image in itself and to the consistency of the continued compositional format. The black areas in the bottom edges of the painting resulted in the facial area no longer filling the whole of the canvas, this disrupts the integration of the surface and the face and integrity of the surface/face is therefore compromised. The inclusion of this black area creates an additional pictorial plane behind the subject and this implies that the subject exists within an illusory space beyond the canvas. In order to avoid any suggestion of anything external to the subject it was decided that in any subsequent works, where the model's face did not fill the square format adequately, the image would be manipulated so that any such boundaries would be removed



Fig.57. Michael Roberts, *Face IV*, 2007. Oil on Canvas, 90 x 60 cm

4. *Face IV* [Fig.57]

In the production of this painting an investigation was conducted into the effects of altering the conceptual basis for facial imaging so that the use of a classically idealising compositional device could be explored.

4.1. The Collection of Visual Data

4.1.1. Choice of Model

The model used in *Face IV*, a female in her late twenties, was chosen partly because she offered a different skin type than the ones used in the previous three studies. She also exhibited a somewhat feminised face, with plucked eyebrows and make up applications. In imaging this gendered aspect of the model an experiment was effectively carried out into the visibility of cosmetic facial modifications as a close range.

4.1.2. Lighting

Identical processes were used as in 1.1.2.

4.1.3. Photography

Identical processes were used as in 2.13.

4.2. Image Selection, Cataloguing and Manipulation

The same processes described in 1.2 were utilised again in this study.

4.2.1. The Compositional Image

This work enacted a compositional experiment that was in keeping with classical notions of idealising the bodily form. For this study the golden section was employed as a compositional device in order to see the effects this would have on images engaging with the notions of ideal realism. The golden ratio, or *phi*, is a number that repeatedly occurs within the proportions of natural forms and has been observed, studied and utilised since antiquity. In classical thought it was held to be the most aesthetically pleasing method of producing geometrical forms and was widely used in art and architectural design.¹⁵⁹

The demands of the golden section required the use of a rectangle rather than a square as the compositional frame. For this reason it was decided that only half a face would be used in this study. The half-face was incorporated into a golden rectangle facial imaging framework. A golden rectangle is produced when the ratio of the width to the length is equal to the ratio of the length to the area of the rectangle. To align the sitter's features with the dictates of the golden ratio a grid was drawn into the golden rectangle, with each of the grid lines following the golden ratio of the rectangle, producing further golden rectangles within the original. The facial features were then arranged around this framework and in order to fit the features into the golden section design some manipulation of the half-face image was necessary. The photograph on which the composition would be based had to be digitally stretched and skewed in places so that the eyes, nose and mouth would align with the compositional grid. It was also necessary to include the model's eyebrow as the area around the eyes, nose and mouth alone was not long enough to fit into the rectangular frame.

4.2.2. Analysis and Manipulation of Close-up Images

The close-up images were manipulated and adjusted in the manner described in 1.2.2.

¹⁵⁹ For an in depth analysis of the Golden Ratio, see: Walser, Hans, *The Golden Section*. (Washington D.C: Mathematical Association of America), 2001

4.3. Support and Surface Preparation

Surface production remained the same as it had for the previous three studies, see: 1.3

4.3.1. Scale and Scale

The proportions of this work altered with the demands of the compositional experiment; however, scale of the images remained consistent with the previous works, see 1.3.1.

4.3.2. The Support

The frame for this painting had to follow the dictates of the golden rectangle compositional design. A stretcher was therefore produced measuring 90 x 60 cm, on to which an appropriately sized cotton canvas was stretched.

4.3.3. Priming

The priming process remained identical to that described in 1.3.3.

4.4. The Transposition of the Photographs to the Canvas

4.4.1. First Transpositional Stage: The Delineation of Composition Features

A grid was drawn on to canvas that followed the golden rectangle's proportions drawn. A projector was then used to project the compositional image on to the gridded canvas with the main facial features - the eye, nose, mouth and eyebrow - placed within the golden section framework.

4.4.2. Second Transpositional Stage: Chromatic Underpainting

The underpainting stage remained consistent with the previous works, see 1.4.2. However, some variation in colour application occurred so that the underlying and unifying colours followed the lines dictated by the golden section framework.

4.4.3. Third Transpositional Stage: Naturalistic Layer

The painting of flesh in these two works followed very similar processes to those enacted in 1.4.3 and 2.4.3. The model's skin tones required little variation on the basic paint formula, with only a little more yellow ochre and lemon yellow mixed being mixed into the concoction.

4.4.4. Forth Transpositional Stage: Highlights

Very little addition to the basic formula introduced in 1.3.4 was needed for the highlight in this painting.

4.5. Conclusions

The implementation of the golden section in this study was felt to be a futile exercise. The ideally proportioned rectangle did not present any perceivable or calculable increase in aesthetic appreciations of the paintings.

The use of a rectangular compositional format served to highlight the advantages of using the square format. In depicting the full-face, rather than a half-face, the square format depicts the full triangle of human facial engagement [Fig.24-25] and is, therefore, more effective in engaging the viewer with the depicted face. The square format also provided a consistent, symmetrical compositional format throughout the first three studies.

It was felt that the overt displays of gender in this image, the make-up and plucked eyebrows, produced contradictory results. Significations of gender have the potential to increase physiognomic and prejudicial interpretations of the subject, the avoidance, or restraint, of which was central to the theoretical basis underlying these facial images. However, the make-up and manipulated eyebrows are of visual interest. The appearance of make-up looks in close-up imagery is of particular interest as the magnification of make-up reveals its artifice; the close-up image shows the way in which lipstick is a smear of red grease upon the lips, or how face-powder sits glued upon a layer of skin toned, viscous foundation. The undulation of the surface persists beneath the mask, spots, lumps, warts, pores and scars continue to be highly visible under close inspection, despite the efforts in creating a uniform the facial surface. The manipulation of the self to fit a socially dictated ideal, the covering of idiosyncrasies to attain a generalised form of femininity, is problematised within the close-up image. This attempt at idealisation is revealed to be a fallacy as the facial textures deny the mask and demonstrate that the minutia of the surface is an inescapable and essential aspect of the human form.



Fig.58. Michael Roberts, *Face V*, 2007. Oil on Canvas, 90 x 60cm.

5. *Face V* [Fig.58]

This painting is a sister piece to the previous work and as such conducts an inverse implementation of the golden section format. Within this design certain experiments were conducted in how paint could best be applied in order to convey different textures of skin.

5.1. The Collection of Visual Data

5.1.1. Choice of Model

The model chosen for this piece was selected because of the similarity of their skin tones to that of the model used in *Face I*. The pale, translucent flesh tones allowed for an increase of blue tones to be added to the palette as the thin surface meant that blue/green veins were more pronounced.

5.1.2. Lighting

Identical processes were used as in 1.1.2.

5.1.3. Photography

Identical processes were used as in 2.1.3.

5.2. Image Selection, Cataloguing and Manipulation

Image selection and Cataloguing followed the methods described in 1.2.

5.2.1. The Composition Image

This study accompanied the previous study and, therefore, utilized the same compositional format, arranged around the golden ratio.

5.2.2. Analysis and Manipulation of Close-up Images

The close-up images were manipulated and adjusted in the manner described in 1.2.2

5.3. Support and Surface Preparation

5.3.1. Scale and Size

The scale and size mirrored the dimensions described in 4.3.1.

5.3.2. The Support

A stretcher measuring 90 x 60 cm was produced, on to which an appropriately sized cotton canvas was stretched.

5.3.3. Priming

The priming process remained identical to that described in 1.3.3

5.4. The Transposition of the Photographs to the Canvas

5.4.1. First Transpositional Stage: The Delineation of Composition Features

The delineation of features mirrored the processes described in 4.4.1.

5.4.2. Second Transpositional Stage: Chromatic Underpainting

The chromatic underpainting mirrored the processes described in 4.4.2.

5.4.3. Third Transpositional Stage: Naturalistic Layer

Face V's model had very similar skin type to the subject of *Face I*, therefore the formulae presented in 1.4.3 could be used again without deviation



Fig. 59. *Face V* (detail). Image showing a range of painting techniques across the surface.

5.4.4. Forth Transpositional Stage: Highlights

This study conducted an inquiry into different methods of paint application across the painting's surface. In this painting, areas of thick, fleshy skin were built up using incremental paint applications, with increasing amounts of cremnitz white being added to the flesh formula in both the naturalistic and highlighting stages. Less dense areas applied a reductive approach to highlighting, where lighter areas were scratched away rather than built upon. A scalpel was used to scrape back the naturalistic paint application, and the chromatic underpainting, to reveal the

primed white surface beneath. The removal of paint, therefore, provided the highlights in these areas of thinner skin [Fig 59]. For the bridge of the nose, where the skin is taught over the bone, sandpaper was used to remove the uppermost layers of paint creating a thin paint surface with the primed canvas showing beneath [Fig.60].¹⁶⁰



Fig. 60. *Face V* (detail). Image showing the scrapped-back highlighting technique.

5.5. Conclusions

The painterly experiments conducted in the highlighting stage were felt to be successful in conveying different qualities of skin across the facial surface, in particular the evocation of thickness or thinness of particular areas of skin. This approach to paint application would, therefore, be utilised in subsequent works.

¹⁶⁰ This method of paint application adopts techniques used by Jenny Saville's. Saville utilises a variety of paint textures to mimic the visual qualities of flesh, see pages 95-97.

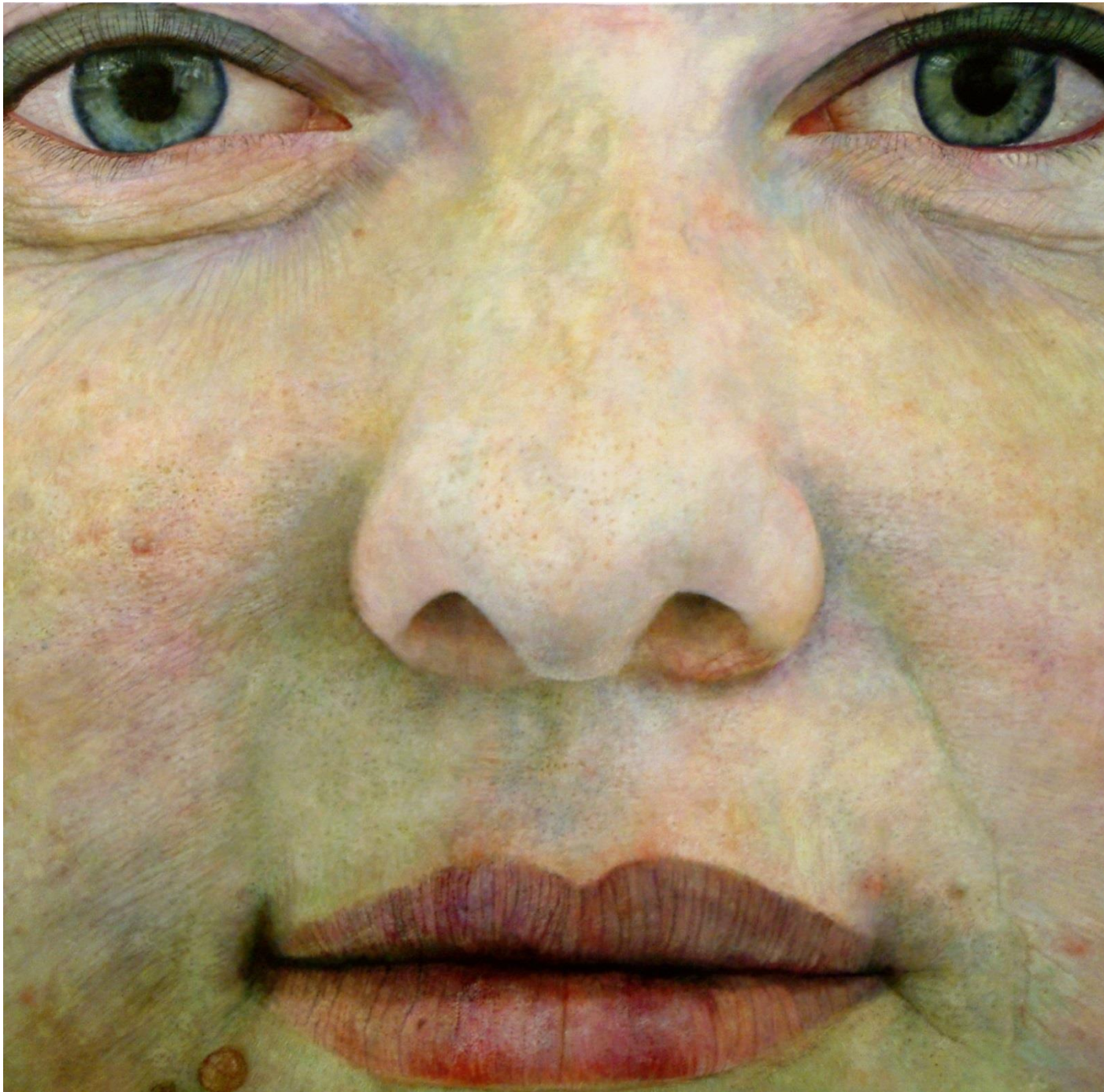


Fig.61. Michael Roberts, *Face VI*, 2007. Oil on Canvas, 150 x 150 cm

6. *Face VI* [Fig.61]

This study presents an investigation in to a composite facial surface.

6.1. The Collection of Visual Data

6.1.1. Choice of Model

For this piece it was decided that the image would be an amalgamation of features from various models. This methodology follows classical methods of implementing ideal realism through the integration of ideal features from a number of sources in order to create an ideal person. This aim of this painting was to subvert the classical composite body by incorporating visually striking, or engaging facial details from a variety of sources in to one facial image.

A request for volunteers was published, from which a large number of responses were received. Images provided by the candidates were analysed and the number of subjects was whittled down to five models. The models chosen were all female and ranged widely in age, they did, however, possess similar or compatible skin tones.

6.1.2. Lighting

The lighting continued to enact the processes described in 1.1.2

6.1.3. Photography

Each model was subjected to the process described in 2.1.3, so that each model yielded a full face image and a variety of close-up images.

6.2. Image Selection, Cataloguing and Manipulation

Suitably detailed images were selected and then catalogued according to which model they belonged to.

6.2.1. The Compositional Image

A single full face image of one of the models was selected to provide a basic framework for the painting. This image would only act as a guide for the positioning of the main facial features. Certain features would subsequently be replaced by elements selected from the visual data provided by the other models.

6.2.2. Analysis and Manipulation of Close-up Images

The close-up images were once again assessed and manipulated, see 1.2.2. For this painting various features were selected to be later transposed. The eyes of one sitter were chosen, the heavily made-up eye lids of another, the nose was selected from one model as were the wrinkles under the eyes and at the corners of the mouth; the large, full lips were chosen from one model while a mole to the side of a mouth was chosen from another; a spot was chosen and placed on a cheek; the veins within a nostril were selected and incorporated. These features were selected based on their immediate visual impact when analysing the accumulated data.

6.3. Support and Surface Preparation

6.3.1. Scale and Size

It was felt that an increase in scale would allow for more details to be incorporated in to the painting. As the a variety of detail formed the hypothesis governing this particular study it was felt that an increase in size and scale by 55.5% (increasing the painting scale to approximately fifteen times life size) would aid a detailed analysis of the component parts of the image.

6.3.2. The Support

A frame measuring 150 x 150cm was produced and an appropriately sized cotton canvas was stretched in place.

6.3.3. Priming

Same process used as in 1.3.3

6.4. The Transposition of the Photographs to the Canvas

6.4.1. First Transpositional Stage: The Delineation of Composition Features

The main compositional full-facial image, described in 4.2.1, was projected on to the primed canvas and an outline of basic facial elements was penciled in. The various features selected from the volunteers were then projected on to the canvas and painted over the basic design, replacing the initially delineated features.

6.4.2. Second Transpositional Stage: Chromatic Underpainting

The chromatic underpainting relied on the processes outlined in 1.4.2. In this image the need for a unifying colourific element beneath the surface was greater as the disparate number of features from a variety of sources required an increased sense of cohesion.

6.4.3. Third Transpositional Stage: Naturalistic Layer

The naturalistic layer involved the detailed representation of many facial images onto the delineated and colourific features. This process followed the system outlined in 1.4.3, the skin

tones of the sitters were all of a similar light tone so the skin formulas used in *Face I* were appropriate for this work.

6.4.4. Forth Transpositional Stage: Highlights

Highlights followed the processes outlined in 1.4.4.

6.5. Conclusions

The elaborate and elongated model selection process combined with the extrapolation of facial features was found to be a problematic exercise. A central aim of this overall project had been to present an evocation of the experiences and sensation generated while engaging, analysing and becoming engrossed with a fellow human beings face; an ordinary experience made extraordinary. The selection of models and of features served to make the hybrid subject somewhat extraordinary. The collection of striking features almost becomes an exercise in imaging the certain grotesque aspects of the models' collective facial surface. In selecting outstanding features the overall-compositional quality of the painting is also disrupted as the visually interesting areas engage the viewer's attention above less eye catching elements. For example, the mole below the right corner of the mouth offers a degree of fascination above more arid areas, such as the expanse of left cheek.

An ethical aspect also had an effect on the analysis of this study. The owner of the mole depicted beneath the mouth had the growth removed shortly after seeing the final painting. Although this may have been a coincidence the enlargement and display of that surface detail could well have contributed to the decision to have the mole removed. It was, therefore, decided that later works would rely on a single individual as a basis for a study, rather than an amalgamation and display of facial parts.

The inclusion of make-up in this study was, again, felt to be problematic. The subject's gender was implied through this addition, displays of gender enable physiognomic interpretations based on a prejudicial knowledge base to operate. It was felt that the piece would have been stronger if the gender of the hybrid had been indistinct.

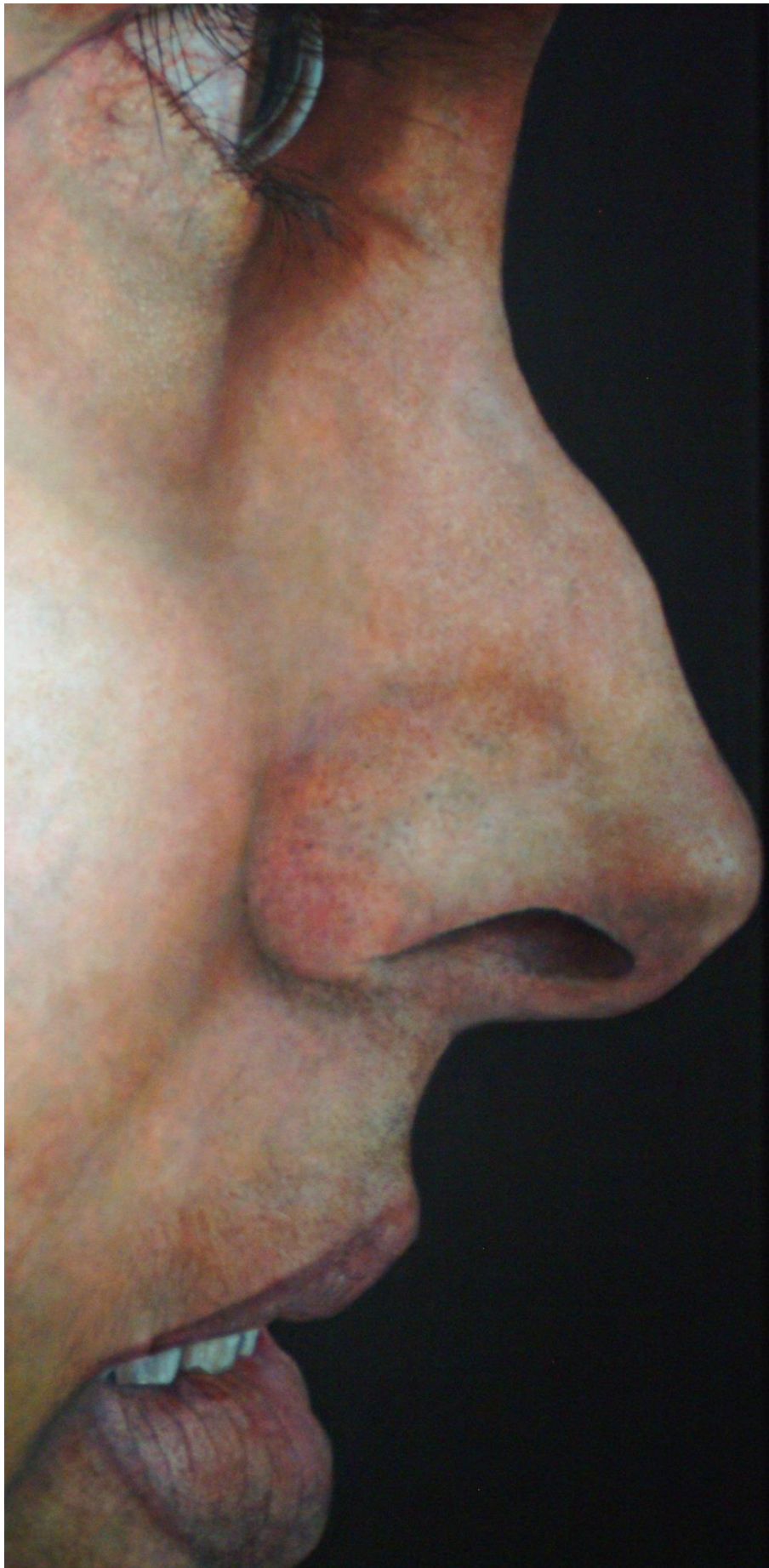


Fig.62. Michael Roberts, *Face VII*, 2007. Oil on Canvas 120 x 60 cm

7. *Face VII* [Fig.62]

This piece applies the conceptual basis underpinning this project to the profile image, a common pictorial device within the portrait genre.

7.1. The Collection of Visual Data

7.1.1. Choice of Model

The model for this work was chosen as a variation on the light skin tones that had been used from *Faces IV* to *Face VI*. The model chosen for this study had a dark yet translucent skin type

7.1.2. Lighting

It was decided that this facial study would experiment with a chiaroscuro treatment of light and shade in order to analyse the effects of lighting on the illusory qualities of the image. The chiaroscuro effect required a reassessment and complete overhaul of the previous lighting setup. It was decided that in order to entirely dictate the direction, strength and tint of the light a studio setting would be preferable to the mixture of sunlight and electrical illumination. Studio lights were therefore set up in a blacked out room. The subject was placed against a black background and the lights were adjusted to achieve an intensity of light and shadow across the subjects face. The yellow tint of the studio light bulbs provided a light source reminiscent of high contrast Baroque painting; this was deemed a suitable tint as this painting followed the illusionist precedents set by the Baroque painters within the parameters of the facial imaging framework.

7.1.3. Photography

A Nikon D80, digital single lens reflex camera (DSLR), with a Nikon 30-70 mm lens, was employed for the photographic stage of this study. The DSLR allowed for higher quality images than the

non-single lens digital camera and allowed for precise manual focusing, a function that allowed a greater level of control over the information contained within the photographs. The DSLR did not have a macro lens, so it was therefore necessary to continue to use the standard digital cameras to obtain macro photographs, which allowed an increased level of magnification. The photographic process was very similar to that described in 1.3.3. Some difficulties arose as the shadow of the photographer was frequently cast over the sitter's face, immersing certain areas in shade and obscuring many details. Adjustments to the studio lights had to be made to compensate for this shadowing. These adjustments meant that the lighting in the detailed, close-up images differed significantly from the full-face photographs. To compensate for this the lighting would be manually altered during the transpositional stage.

7.2. Image Selection, Cataloguing and Manipulation

A similar selection and cataloguing process was conducted as described in 1.2.

7.2.1. The Compositional Image

In experimenting with the profile image this study presented the face in an entirely different angle from the previous works. However, the parameters of the image remained consistent with the facial imaging design in that the edges of the image were dictated by the edges of the major facial features. The corner of the eye formed the left edge; the top of the eye the upper, the lower lip formed the bottom and the tip of the nose the right.

7.2.2. Analysis and Manipulation of Close-up Images

The images were analysed and altered in similar ways to the methods described in 1.2.2. A criteria for manipulation in this work relied on the altering of images to enhance the effects of light and shade on the minutia of the skin.

7.3. Image Size, Support and Surface Preparation

7.3.1. Scale and Size

The scale of this image remained largely consistent with the previous works, being approximately twelve times larger than life.

7.3.2. The Support

A frame measuring 120 x 60 cm was produced and a cotton canvas stretched over the support.

7.3.3. Priming

The image was primed in the manner described in 1.3.3

7.4. The Transposition of the Photographs to the Canvas

7.4.1. First Transpositional Stage: The Delineation of Composition Features

A combination of a grid system and a projected image allowed the outline of the facial features to be scribed on to the canvas, as described in 2.4.1.

7.4.2. Second Transpositional Stage: Chromatic Underpainting

This study involved the application of an entirely different type of underpainting to the previous works. As stated in 2.4.2 one of the aims of chromatic underpainting was to visually suggest the elements at work beneath the surface of the skin. This study takes that assertion to a conclusion

in providing a pseudo-naturalistic representation of the viscera beneath the surface of the skin, which significantly contributes to its appearance.¹⁶¹

In imaging the movement and chaos of the sub-surface viscera a technique similar to that employed by the Abstract Expressionist pioneer Jackson Pollock was employed. The manner in which Pollock streaked paint across the canvas evokes a sense of movement within his work, as the energy generated from the motion of the artist's arm was fixed and made tangible when the paint struck the canvas. The energy and movement perceptible in Pollock's paintings was, therefore, replicated in the underpainting of this study, with the energetic method of paint application employed to suggest the constant movement and energy of the body [Figs 63-66].

To enact this expressive application a thin paint solution was made from two parts white spirit to one part paint. The main colour used in this exercise was alizarin crimson, with some cadmium red used for lighter areas and cadmium red dark used for shadowed regions. With reference to images of flayed cadavers obtained from anatomical textbooks a large brush was used to streak and spray paint across the surface of the canvas. Following the expressive application areas of red were painted in a more conventional manner, filling in the areas not covered by the streaked paint. In keeping with the previous usage of complementary colours (see: 1.4.2) emerald green was added to darker shadowed regions, to provide contrast and delineation within certain areas.

¹⁶¹I have chosen to use the term pseudo-naturalistic as the underpainting was in no way a mimetic representation of the sub-surface bodily elements; this underpainting was implemented to give an impression of the viscera beneath the surface.

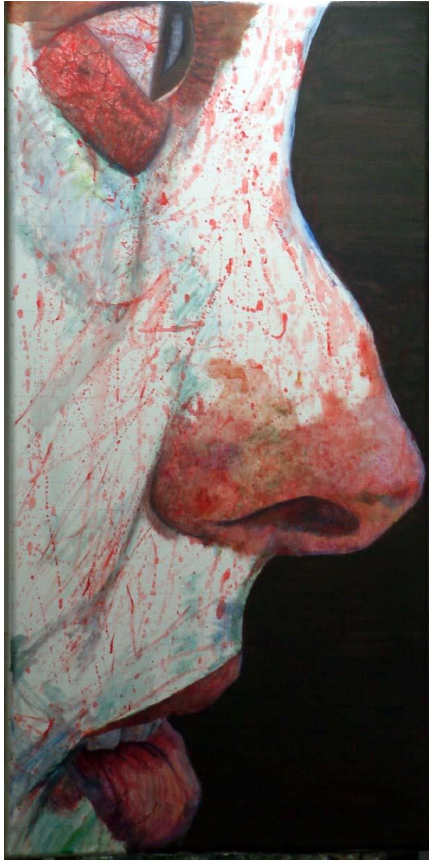


Fig.63. Face VII. Initial underpainting



Fig.64. Face VII. Complete underpainting

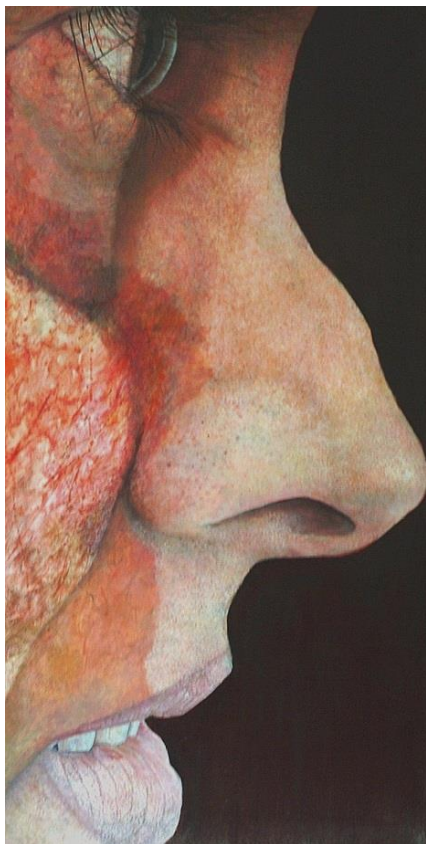


Fig.65. Face VII. Addition of naturalistic skin tones



Fig.66. Face VII. Finished piece

7.4.3. Third Transpositional Stage: Naturalistic Layer

The naturalistic second stage followed on from the methods and formulas used for *Face III*, described in 2.4.3

7.4.4. Forth Transpositional Stage: Highlights

Highlights followed the formulas employed in the production of *Face III*, the slight yellow tint generated by the studio lights required a little more yellow ochre to be added to the formula.

7.5. Conclusions

The profile compositional format was found to be lacking the visual engagement and consistency provided by the square compositional format. As observed in *Face IV* and *Face V* the half-face, containing a single eye, fails to enact the sensations generated through eye contact with two eyes. The eye turned to the right in this facial study adds an additional barrier to engagement with the subject.

The experimentation with lighting demonstrated that control over the illumination of the image could effectively increase and decrease the amount of light and shade within the image, and could therefore be used to highlight certain areas, or aspects of the face. The use of studio lighting required more time and work than the use of sunlight as the blacked-out room and studio lights required setting up and adjusting throughout the photographic sessions. This proved particularly time consuming when the model had to be called back for additional photographic sessions. Because of the time and effort involved in the use of studio lighting it was, therefore, only used in one of the subsequent paintings.

The overhaul of the underpainting process produced mixed results. The initial underpainting stage produced an effective impression of bodily movements and energies. However, when the

energetic underpainting was over-painted in the second and third transpositional stages the effect of the underpainting was masked and its effects diminished by successive layers of paint.

An unexpected outcome of this work was that the priming process used in this piece, and in the previous six works, was revealed to be flawed. The painting had been chosen for exhibition as a part of *The Welsh Portrait 2* (2008), after the exhibition a courier transported the image back from the exhibition venue. Upon return it was evident that the image had suffered some surface damage in transit, with a number of large cracks apparent across the picture surface. A consultation was conducted with Easel Painting Conservator at the National Library of Wales, Jenny Williamson (b.1962). This consultation revealed that this is a common effect where layers of oil paint are applied over multiple coats of acrylic gesso primer. The oil paint cracks due to the fatness, or flexibility, of the acrylic paint beneath the hard, lean oils. The damage this painting suffered meant that in future works the priming process would be altered and different materials employed.¹⁶²

¹⁶² Jenny Williamson's advice on the use of acrylic gesso primer in oil painting is echoed in Pearce, Emma *Artist's Materials: Which, Why and How*. (London: A & C Black, 1992), 24 & 85

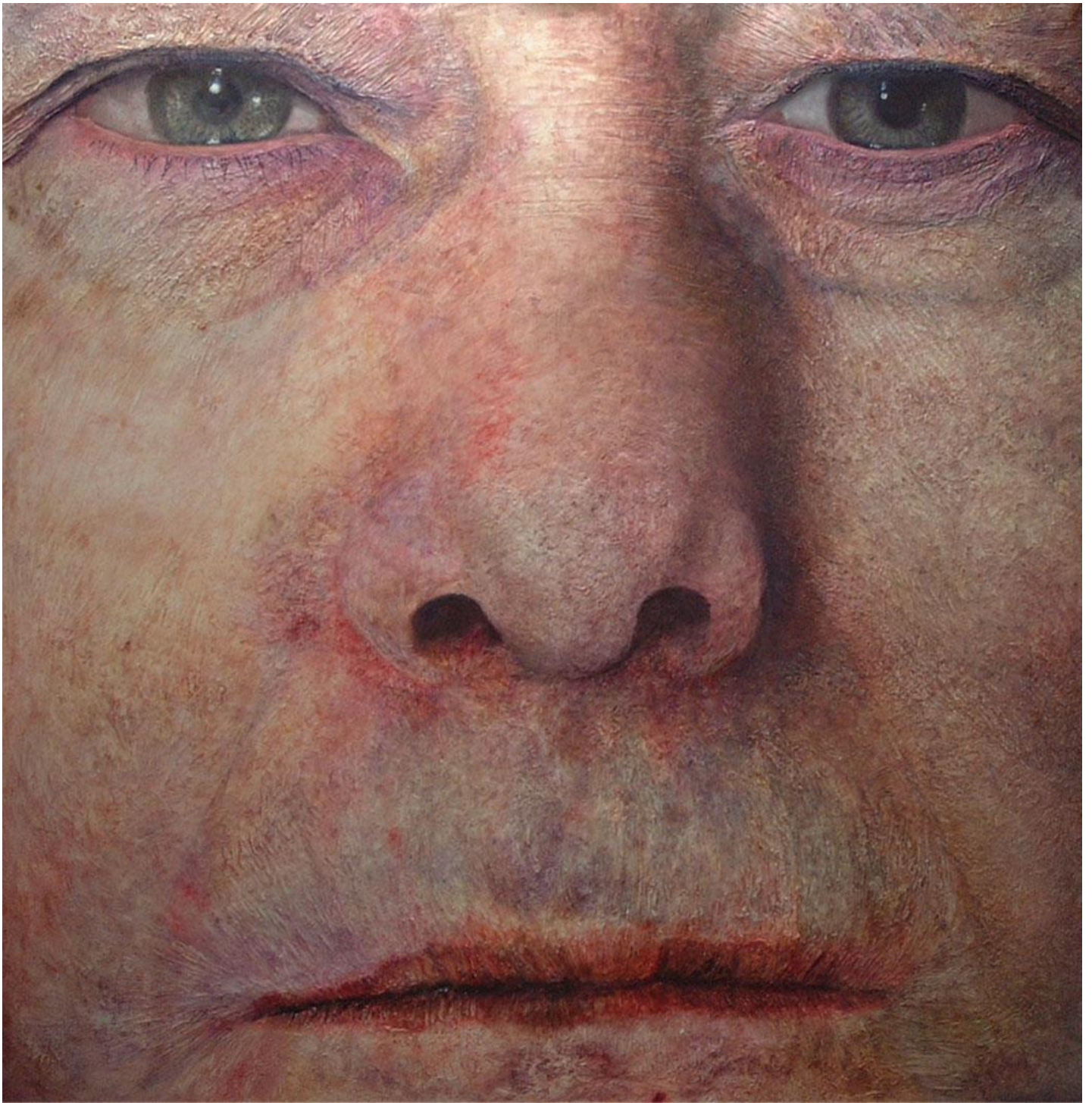


Fig 67. Michael Roberts, *Face VIII*, 2008. Oil on Canvas, 100 x 100 cm

8. *Face VIII* [Fig.67]

This study conducted an investigation into the potential enhancement of the haptic viewing process through an increase in paint density.

8.1. The Collection of Visual Data

8.1.1. Choice of Model

The model was a male subject in his late fifties. This subject was chosen as their weathered skin would provide a good basis for a textured, uneven and undulating surface.

8.1.2. Lighting

For convenience sake the lighting utilised the same process as outlined in 1.1.2. There was neither the time nor the opportunity to conduct the time consuming and laborious studio sessions undertaken in the previous study.

8.1.3. Photography

The DSLR camera was not available for this work so the photographic phase of this study applied a similar process to the one described in 1.1.3.

8.2. Image Selection, Cataloguing and Manipulation

Images were selected depending on whether or not they adequately captured a sense of course flesh. They were then catalogued in the manner described in 1.2.

8.2.1. The Compositional Image

It was established in *Face IV*, *Face V* and *Face VII* that the square compositional format offered greater engagement, symmetry and consistency than the rectangular frame. The square compositional format was, therefore, employed in this study.

8.2.2. Analysis and Manipulation of Close-up Images

The close-up images were considered in terms of how they would be later imaged in a thick, impasto paint application. Individual facial features were manipulated with an increased contrast being used to accentuate the illusory depth of the facial minutia.

8.3. Support and Surface Preparation

8.3.1. Scale and Size

The scale of the image remained consistent with the previous works, this piece being only marginally larger (9.9%) than the first three studies, producing an image ten times larger than life.

8.3.2. The Support

A 100 x 100 cm stretched was constructed and a cotton canvas was applied to the frame, see:
1.3.2

8.3.3. Priming

The priming phase was identical to the processes described in 1.3.3. It was regrettable that work had already begun on this piece before the damage had occurred to *Face VII*;¹⁶³ the overhaul in priming methods could, therefore, not take place in this painting.

8.4. The Transposition of the Photographs to the Canvas

To investigate the effects of paint density on the perception of the painting transpositional stages two and three were adapted according to a different painting method. There was no longer a chromatic underpainting stage, instead the second transpositional stage of this study involved the achromatic impasto paint application; while the third stage added colour to these foundations.

8.4.1. First Transpositional Stage: The Delineation of Composition Features

A combination of projection and grid systems were used to delineate the main facial features, see: 2.4.1.

8.4.2. Second Transpositional Stage: Achromatic Impasto Foundations

To enhance the sensation of haptic visual engagement with the facial/picture surface a thick layer of cremnitz white paint was mixed, in equal parts, with Liquin, an oil paint medium that halves the drying time of the paint, the additional of this medium was necessary as without it the thick oil paint would take too long to dry. The thick paint/medium mixture was used to depict the surface details of each feature of the face. Working from close-up images the wrinkles, pores and raised areas of the skin visible in the photographs were interpreted in thick, sculptural

¹⁶³ See 7.5

brushstrokes; with the bristles of the paint brush occasionally being used to provide linear details [Figs. 68-69].

This technique appropriated methods used by Rembrandt in his late self-portraits [Fig. 37].¹⁶⁴ Rembrandt's methodology involved a layering of thick impasto achromatic paint on to which thinner saturated glazes would be applied. Rembrandt employed a highly textured surface to enhance the illusory space within his works and contrasted heavily textured areas with flat, smooth regions and this served to enhance the illusion of depth within the paintings. Course, raised surface areas appear to closer to the viewer than flat, smooth, areas. This effect is particularly pronounced when the two different types of surface are adjacent to one another. Although there is not a great deal of distance to convey in the facial image cropped into square compositional format, the juxtaposition of course regions with smooth areas was utilised in the depiction of the eyes, the jelly-like surface of the eyeball being sharply contrasted with the heavy eyelids surrounding them [Fig.70].

A dense paint application can also be used to visually approximate qualities of flesh and skin. Rembrandt used this impasto technique create a link between the physicality of the paint and the corporeal experience of flesh. As detailed in the section on haptic viewing and synesthesia, different methods of paint application can recall dense, sagging and heavy flesh as well as thin, taught and delicate skin.

¹⁶⁴ For a detailed analysis of Rembrandt's painting flesh techniques see: Ernst Van De Wetering, *Rembrandt: The Painter at Work*. Berkeley: (University of California Press, 2009), 215-222.



Fig.68. *Face VIII* (detail)



Fig.69. *Face VIII* (detail)



Fig.70. *Face VIII* (detail)

8.4.3. Third Transpositional Stage: Colourisation

A series of coloured and tonal glazes were applied over the textured white surface. Partly to render naturalistic skin tones and partly to enact the colour enhancement previous fulfilled by the chromatic underpainting process.

The colourific glazes worked in synergy the achromatic underpainting to subtly exaggerate the colours that were discernible in the subject's skin. The white impasto underpainting employed in this facial study operates in an inverse manner to the chromatic underpainting used in the previous studies. Light is transmitted through the layer of pigment and is reflected back off of the white ground beneath, the reflected light then passes back through the pigment, resulting in the coloured glaze being illuminated from beneath. This method of painting meant that the colours operated at full saturation as they were not dulled or muddied through mixing processes, nor did they have the pastel or chalky qualities caused by mixing white paint with coloured.

The coloured glaze over white a white ground meant that a subsequent highlighting stage was not required. The glazing process involved building up dark areas through successive layers of paint being applied until the required shade was achieved; while lighter areas of the image required fewer glazes to achieve the necessary level of brightness. The impasto underpainting aided the demarcation of shadowed areas as the coloured glazes pooled within the ridges of the thick white paint.

8.4. Conclusions

The impasto technique used in this study was effective in evoking a sense of craggy, weathered skin. The use of a heavily textured, painterly approach causes an oscillation process in the viewers' perception of the piece. The viewer's perception shifts between corporeal spaces: the heavily rendered - almost sculptural surface and the chromatic glazes that create an illusory sense of depth. The most obvious example of this effect is the shadow cast by the nose where the majority of the illusion is created by dark pigment. However, the impasto under painting - primarily used to add texture to the surface - results in nose being physically raised above the surface of the cheek. This surface shifts between the illusory and the corporeal, conception (information derived from memory and expectations) and perception (information received through the eye). The mind interprets colour and shade as undulating shapes, painted shadows conform to the viewer's conception of facial features, what they expect to see. The eye, however, can perceive the actual physicality of the impasto surface, which denies the conceived illusion and results in a perceptual shift between the conceived representational image and the impasto surface¹⁶⁵.

¹⁶⁵ These perceptual shifts led to further research in to this area, primarily following on from Richard Gregory's and Ernest Gombrich's research into the hollow face illusion. A hollow face is a concave mask that appears convex due to mind's expectation of the subject, top down information (conception) information overriding visual, or bottom up, information (perception). Footage of a prototype mask produced can be found here:

<http://m.youtube.com/watch?feature=plcp&v=cN8pIJyT0As>

An accompanying research paper can be found in the appendix. Further research in this area was halted as it was felt that the contribution to existing research would be limited and this path would deviate from the parameters of this research topic that primarily focuses on discourses surrounding two dimensional imagery

It was observed that an increase in impasto paint application resulted in a significant loss of intricate surface detail. The demands of the thick paint made it impossible to detail the minute elements of the facial surface and resulted in a greater reliance on approximating certain details of the face. This loss of detail was most noticeable in the areas above the eyes where the thick paint lost its ability to effectively approximate the appearance of flesh and skin.

The use of a thick paint application also made the work too sculptural and this detracted from the illusory qualities of the painting. Some of the shadows were actual shadows cast by light sources external to the image falling on raised areas of the surface. This disrupted the internal integrity of the painting and relinquished a degree of pictorial control to the environment in which the painting happened to be situated.



Fig 71. Michael Roberts, *Face IX*, 2009. Oil on Board, 100 x 100cm

9. *Face IX* [Fig.71]

This study continued to utilise the glazing techniques enacted in the previous study. This piece explores the potential of a flat, purely illusionistic rendering of the facial surface, as opposed to investigating the perceptual effects of a heavily textured surface.

9.1. The Collection of Visual Data

9.1.1. Choice of Model

The model chose for this piece was a five year old male. The choice of a very young subject was dictated by the need for smoother, less course surface in reaction to the preceding study.

9.1.2. Lighting

The majority of the photographs were taken outdoors on a sunny day. The subject's back was once again facing the light to limit the amount of strong shadows being cast across the subject's face.

9.1.3. Photography

Due to the nature of the subject it was only possible to obtain a limited number of photographs.¹⁶⁶

9.2. Image Selection, Cataloguing and Manipulation

Because of the limited source information very little selection or cataloguing was required.

¹⁶⁶ The model refused to remain stationary for very long.

9.2.1. The Compositional Image

The only available full face photograph was cropped around the eye nose and mouth to form a square composition, as described in 1.2.1

9.2.2. Analysis and Manipulation of Close-up Images

There were very few close-up images. To compensate for this, photographs covering larger areas were zoomed in on and cropped so that some of the details were enlarged. These were then manipulated in the same manner described in 1.2.2.

9.3. Support and Surface Preparation

Following the paint cracking that had occurred in Face VIII (see 7.5) a new means of surface preparation was required.

9.3.1. Scale

The scale of the image remained consistent with the previous works.

9.3.2. The Support

The flexible material supports used in the previous works were identified as a factor in the cracking that had occurred in *Face VIII*. Therefore, in this study a square block, measuring 100 x 100 x 2 cm, of medium-density fibreboard (MDF) was used as an alternative means of support. An added advantage of this surface was that the MDF provided a smoother surface than the canvas supports had in the previous studies.

The board was dampened in cold water and left to dry in a horizontal position. This treatment was carried out in order to prevent any subsequent warping of the wood. A further aid to the prevention of warping involved the addition of two wooden supports, measuring 100 x 5 x 2 cm, being screwed and glued on to the reverse side of the wood of the painting.

9.3.3. Priming

The first stage of priming involved creating a mixture of equal parts lead white paint and white spirit, lead white primer being a more suitable base for oil painting than the gesso primer used in previous works.¹⁶⁷ This blend was then worked into the MDF board, with a size 4 brush, in broad repetitive brush strokes; the thin consistency of the mixture allowed the primer to sink deep in to the wood. This application was left to dry for twenty-four hours after which time the board was sanded down so that the surface was as smooth as possible. This process was repeated with the same 50:50 mixture three times.

The next priming stage involved increasing the amounts of lead white paint in the primer, the ratio now being roughly two parts lead white to one part white spirit. The mixture was once again applied to the surface and sanded back three more times. The components of the primer were altered once again, this time with three parts lead white to one part white spirit. This was then applied and sanded down three times.

The final three applicators of primer involved using pure lead white paint. The painting was sanded back using increasingly fine sandpaper, between each coat. To achieve an extremely smooth surface, wet and dry sandpaper was employed; this technique removed any dust from the surface during the sanding phase so that, as the grain of the paper became increasingly fine, the surface became smoother. The final sanding session employed an emery cloth to create

¹⁶⁷ It is worth noting that gloves and a face mask must be used during this sanding process as the white lead primer is toxic. It is also necessary to remove any dust or debris created through this process.

uniformed white, extremely smooth and polished surface, free from lumps, marks, indentations or abrasions.

The lead white primer takes approximately six months to dry entirely. However, forty-eight hours after the final application the paint is dry to the touch and suitable for painting on. At this level of dryness the primer is somewhat absorbent so that any oil paint applied to the surface will become integrated in to the surface. This can be problematic as in the event of an error the surface would have to be sanded back and the lead white primer reapplied.

9.4. The Transposition of the Photographs to the Canvas

In transposing images from the photographic sources to the canvas only two stages were enacted. There was no underpainting involved in this study nor was there any need for a separate highlighting stage. The transpositional process involved the delineation of main features and painting the details within these features.

9.4.1. First Transpositional Stage: The Delineation of Composition Features

The delineation of features for this painting relied solely on the projection method of transposition, described in 2.2. The general lack of photographic material meant that the grid system was not required. The main facial features were outlined using a fine pencil (4h), delineations that would remain indistinct in the final painting and require minimal erasure. The use of acrylic paint as a delineating tool in earlier works had been acceptable as it was covered over by later applications of paint. The glazing method employed in this piece uses such a delicate film of paint that would fail to cover a dense underdrawing, a fine pencil was therefore the best means of outlining the main facial elements.

9.4.2. Second Transpositional Stage: Details and Colours

The paint application process followed a similar method to that described in 8.4.3, only without textures provided by the impasto paint surface. Colour was added in very thin washes of paint applied to each facial feature in turn. Shades were gradually built with washes of unmixed colours being built upon to alter their colour and tonal value. Lighter areas required thinner washes while darker areas a multilayered blend of chroma.¹⁶⁸

Colour theory was still adhered to, albeit in subtler manner than the methods used for the chromatic underpainting. The washes of colour continued to place complimentary colours across the canvas to give a sense of unity. While warm colours were used to bring highlights towards the viewer and cooler colours were employed to make certain areas recede.

9.5. Conclusions

The flat surface and glazing technique meant that extremely thin lines could be applied to the piece allowing for a greater degree of precision and clarification of surface data than had previously been possible with thicker, painterly applications. The details could also be applied incrementally, allowing for alterations to be made throughout the outlining and colourising of surface minutia.

The glazing technique resulted in a degree of colour quality and saturation superior to that of previous works. This had been observed in 8.4; however, without the influence of raised surface textures, which cast shadows across the image, the colours used in this piece were of a greater intensity than they had been in any the previous study.

¹⁶⁸ This technique follows those used by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in the creation of bright jewel-like paintings. For a detailed overview of Pre-Raphaelite colour application, and a thorough explanation of how the paint passes through the pigment and reflects off the ground see: Townsend, Joyce H, Hackney, Stephen and Ridge, Jacqueline. *Pre-Raphaelite Painting Techniques: 1848-56*. (London: Tate Publishing, 2004), 51-75.

The use of thin washes as opposed to thick layers of paint did lead to a slight loss of connection between the physicality of flesh and the contents image. The lack of a tactile surface meant that the image was distanced from the physicality of the body, and this inhibited haptic viewing, to a degree. Without a tactile surface the exaggeration of colour and use of colour theory principles became somewhat divorced from the reality that the painting was supposed to represent.

The lack of sculptural rendering meant that the viewer's concentration was fixed upon the formal qualities of the surface and evocation of illusory space; the colours, tones and shades that describe the complexities of the bodily surface. The use of washes on a flat surface also meant that the action of painting became less discernible as the delicate applications of thin glazes of paint resulted in the successive brushstrokes denying one another and disappearing into a mass of layers.

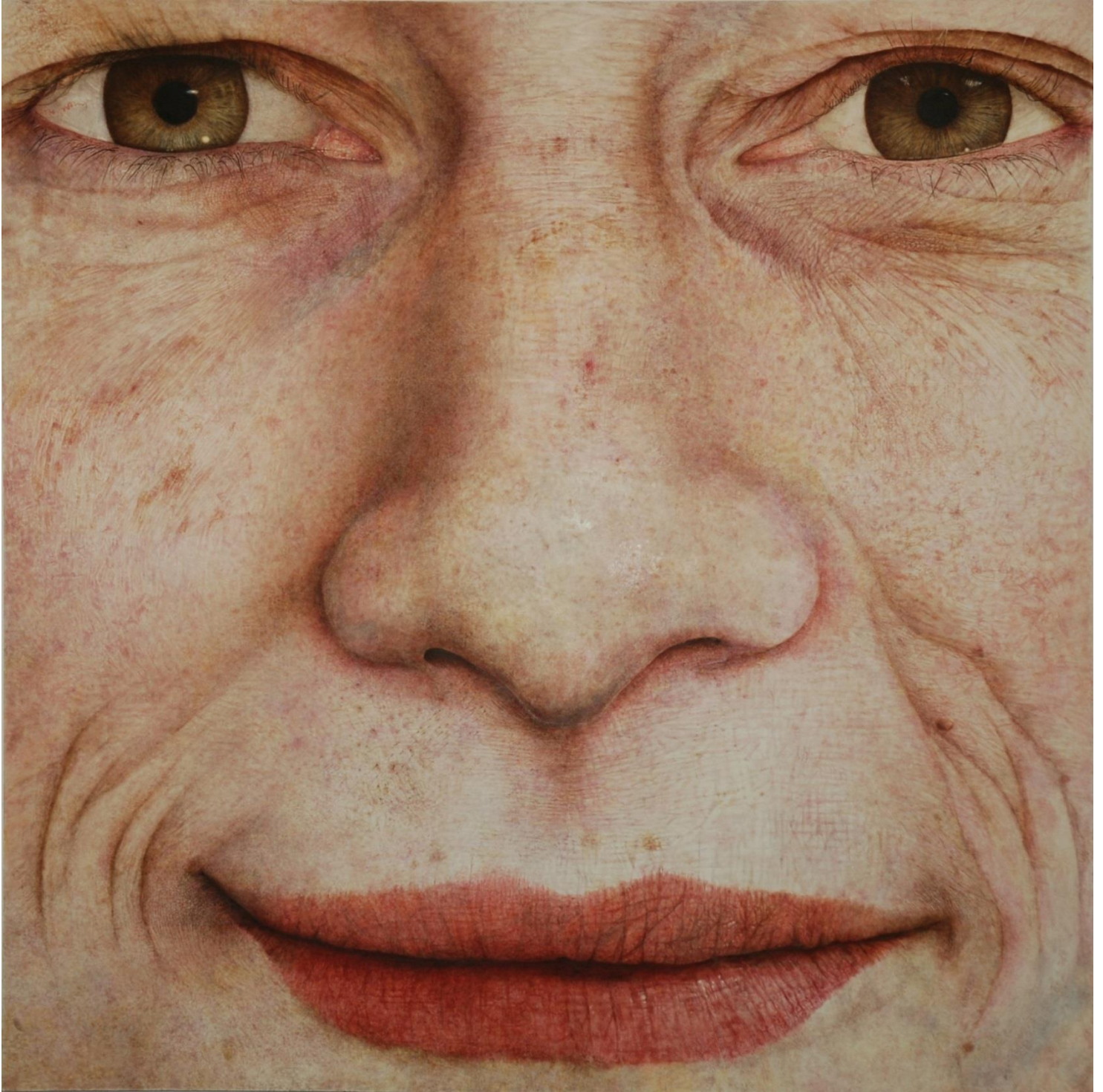


Fig.72. Michael Roberts, *Face X*, 2009–10. Oil on canvas, 200 x 200cm

10. *Face X* [Fig.72]

This final study utilised an accumulated knowledge built upon the investigations carried out in the previous nine studies. This painting, therefore, represents a best practice approach for implementing the compositional framework for facial imaging in a material form.

10.1. The Collection of Visual Data

10.1.1. Choice of Model

This painting utilised two subjects as sources of visual information. The primary model, a female in her early thirties, provided the basis, and the majority of details, for the facial image. The secondary source of visual information was my own facial surface, which was used to supplement the primary material. A personal fascination with the facial surface is a thread that runs throughout every aspect of this project. The fundamental connection between all of the studies arises from an engagement and interest in my own facial surface. This interest in my own facial surface is mirrored through an engagement and fascination with the surfaces of others. We define and understand ourselves through differentiation; all of these works, therefore, contain an element of self-portraiture in that they enact a personal enquiry of intrigue and self-discovery. They are simultaneously unlike me and like me; they are distinct, idiosyncratic surfaces and yet they are interconnected through their nature as human surfaces.

The use of images solely derived from my own facial surface were considered as a basis for this final study, however, it was felt that a complete self-portrait could potentially read as an indexical sign referencing my identity. If this study had been a complete self-portrait there would have been a direct visual link between myself and the image and were the viewer to identify me as the subject, or to become aware of the identity of the subject by any other means, then the potential for physiognomic interpretation would broaden. It would be a likelihood that issues surrounding notions of self-expression, the depiction of individuality, egotism and the psychology of the self-image could be read into the painting.

There was also a practical reason for not using myself in this work. It would be very hard, if not impossible, for me to take a large amount of images of my own facial surface; images ranging from full-faced images to extremely close-up pictures. An additional photographer would have been necessary to accrue the raw visual data and this would have meant relinquishing an element of control to a second party.

The primary model was chosen as she was of similar age to me and had a close skin tone. The visual proximity between of our facial details meant that our features could be amalgamated without much intervention, invention, or manipulation. The final painting would therefore be an investigation of aspects of my facial surface through the image of another.

10.1.2. Lighting

The use of studio lighting as a means to allow greater control over the illumination of the subject, established in 7.1.2, was utilised again in this study. Studio lighting was employed in order to control the direction and degree of light in both the overall compositional image and within very specific areas; this control increased the amount of visual data discernible in the photographs.

Additional lighting was utilised to aid the close-up photographic process, where the shadow of the photographer tended to obscure the very fine details, or when the camera was too close to the surface to allow much light to fall on to the features. A LED (light-emitting diode) ring was fitted around the edge of the DSLR camera's lens.¹⁶⁹ This addition served to fully illuminate images taken at 1cm from the surface and greatly increased clarification of the surface minutia.

10.1.3. Photography

¹⁶⁹ The LED ring is a multipurpose device available from most hardware stores

A number of additional photographic techniques were employed in this study to overcome problems and inadequacies that have been identified in previous investigations. One continual issue was that the non SLR digital cameras had a great deal of difficulty automatically focusing adequately on objects at distances of between one and two centimeters from the surface. When a digital camera did have a manual focus override this invariably lacked the subtlety required to adjust the focus for very small details. The outcome of this problem was that many unusable photographs would be taken before the camera's focusing mechanism adequately clarified the surface information and this meant a lot of time was wasted in having to re-photograph indistinct areas.

The DSLR camera provided very delicate manual focusing capabilities; however, this device lacked a macro lens. Purchasing a macro lens to use with the DSLR was prohibitively expensive so an alternate solution was sourced. Research in to the best means of modifying the DSLR camera's existing lens resulted in a reversal lens being applied to the Nikon 30-70mm zoom lens. The reversal lens sits between the main body of the camera and the base of the lens and reverses the effects of the lens. A reversal ring makes a lens, which usually miniaturizes all before it, enlarge everything instead. This device, coupled with the LED light ring described in 10.1.2 meant that high quality, fully illuminated images of the surface minutia could be obtained.

Approximately nine months into the production research was carried out into potential means of obtaining images of a magnification beyond that of the macro lens. This research concluded with the purchase of a Veho USB microscope, a device that offered a degree of magnification between 40 and 400 times larger than life and had an integrated LED light ring to provide illumination. This acquisition led to an additional photographic session yielding an abundance of microscopic images that could be cross referenced with existing data.

It was deemed necessary that the minute detail of the eyes would also be imaged using the microscope. However, because of the intense LED surrounding the lens of the device, it was felt that the primary model should not be subjected to the uncomfortable experience of having

bright lights shone in to her eyes for a sustained periods of time. The microscopic details of the eye were therefore provided by my eyes, which were similar in appearance and colour to those of the primary model.

The new technologies employed in the gathering of visual information led to an increase in photographic experimentation. The degree of focal control enabled by the reversal lens led to experiments with depth of field being conducted. It was found that, when photographing minute details, contrasts of soft focus and a sharp focus could be used to isolate and highlight certain aspects of the facial surface.

10.2. Image Selection, Cataloguing and Manipulation

10.2.1. The Compositional Image

A single image displaying the primary model's facial details was cropped in to a square format to provide the outlining facial details, as detailed in 1.2.1.

10.2.2. Analysis and Manipulation of Close-up Images

In a similar method to that described in 1.2.2, the closes up images were altered to best display their content. With the distortions and varied lighting effects added through the studio lighting and the LED light rings more time was required manipulating the images in order to make the colours and contrast less distinct, so that the final painting would have an internal consistency and not appear fragmented. The LED lighting tended to have a blue tint, while the studio lighting had a yellowish quality; this meant that the blue light needed digitally adjusting so that it was consistent with the studio lighting.



Fig.73. A selection of images demonstrating the photographic procedure for *Face X* using the Nikon D80 camera. The macro images were obtained using the lens reversal ring.



Fig.74. A selection of images demonstrating the photographic procedure for *Face X* using a digital microscope, providing magnification between 40 times and 400 times life size.

10.3. Support and Surface Preparation

10.3.1. Scale and Size

The inclusion of better quality images containing an increased level of detail required an enlargement in the scale and size of the image. This painting was therefore twice the size of the previous work, and the overall scale of the piece twenty times larger than life. The enlarged scale and size of the image lacked the intimacy of the smaller paintings; however, the new proportions allowed the painting to completely dominate the viewer's field of vision, from a distance of several meters away. The enlarged scale also allowed a level of detail to be incorporated that went beyond the capabilities of human sight.

The multifarious nature of the source material meant that the scale of the surface details was disparate throughout the raw visual data and these variations in scale were deliberately incorporated into the final painting in order to enhance certain aspects of the painting. Subtle changes in scale occur throughout the study with certain areas of interest enlarged and other areas diminished. For example the way in which light reflected off of a collection of pores located at the right corner of the mouth, was increased in scale so that it was discernible in the final image and not just an area of minutia lost within an abundance of visual information.

The alterations in scale were enacted to mimic a corporeal way of looking at the body. In *The Shape of a Pocket* John Berger demonstrates how, in a number of Rembrandt's drawings, aspects of the body are distorted to replicate the way in which the eye and brain perceive visual reality:

“[Points] of view” can only exist in a corporeal space which is incompatible with territorial or architectural space. Corporeal space is continually changing its measures and focal centres, according to circumstances. It measures by waves, not meters. Hence its necessary dislocations of “real” space...Before his art, the spectator’s body remembers its own inner experience.¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ John Berger, *The Shape of a Pocket*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2002), 109.

In this tenth facial study variations in the use of scale, depth of field, focus and lighting were employed to reflect a similar corporeal engagement with the subject. When the field of vision is occupied by an area of flesh, or a face, it is initially confronted with an abundance of detail, the eye flits across the surface looking from one detail to the next. When the eye is brought to rest on a particular aspect, perhaps a wrinkle, a hair or a vein, a period of sustained viewing clarifies that element, while the surrounding visual data diminishes in clarity. The aspect under inspection appears larger than the surrounding elements and, by prolonging the gaze further colours, details and complexities are revealed.

10.3.2. The Support

The use of primed MDF as a painting surface had proved to be a great success in the previous study; however, reenacting this would not be possible in this piece. An overall doubling of scale necessitated a doubling in picture size; the painting would therefore need to be 200 x 200 cm. A square block of MDF at this size would have been extremely heavy and too much for one person to effectively manoeuvre. It was therefore decided that a material support would be used, with a number of modifications incorporated to avoid the issues outlined in 7.5.

A frame was made up measuring 200 x 200 cm on to which a linen canvas was stretched. Linen canvas was chosen over cotton as it has a tighter and finer weave, which aids the production of a flat surface during the subsequent priming stage. A layer of PH neutral Pearl Glue¹⁷¹ was applied to protect the taught linen from the degrading effects of the oil paints and to limit the porous nature of the material.¹⁷² This sizing was then sanded and ironed in order to create a uniform flat surface ready for priming.

¹⁷¹An alternative to rabbit skin glue that is not derived from an animal obtained after consultation with the art suppliers L. Cornelissen & Son.

¹⁷² See: Max Doerner, *The Materials of the Artist: And Their Use in Paintings*, trans. Eugen Neuhaus. (London: Hart-Davis, 1969). 9-10

10.3.3. Priming

The priming process followed the application described in 9.3.2, with the primer being worked in to the prepared linen.

10.4. The Transposition of the Photographs to the Canvas

10.4.1. First Transpositional Stage: The Delineation of Composition Features

The main facial features were delineated using a projection of the compositional image, see: 2.4.

10.4.2. Second Transpositional Stage: Details and Colours

As the painting was so large, small grids were drawn over the main facial features so that the smaller details, from macro and microscopic sources, could be accurately incorporated in to the main facial elements [Fig. 75]. For example, a grid was drawn around the iris of the eye and the basic lines and shades were pencilled in to each square from a corresponding gridded picture of the eye [Fig. 76], at this stage the macro images depicting details approximately six times larger than life were utilised. Once the contents of the iris had been delineated the drawing was cross-referenced with the microscopic images taken of my eye, at forty to four hundred times life size, the details of the iris were then clarified in greater detail and complexity.



Fig.75. *Face X* (in progress), delineated compositional features on canvas.

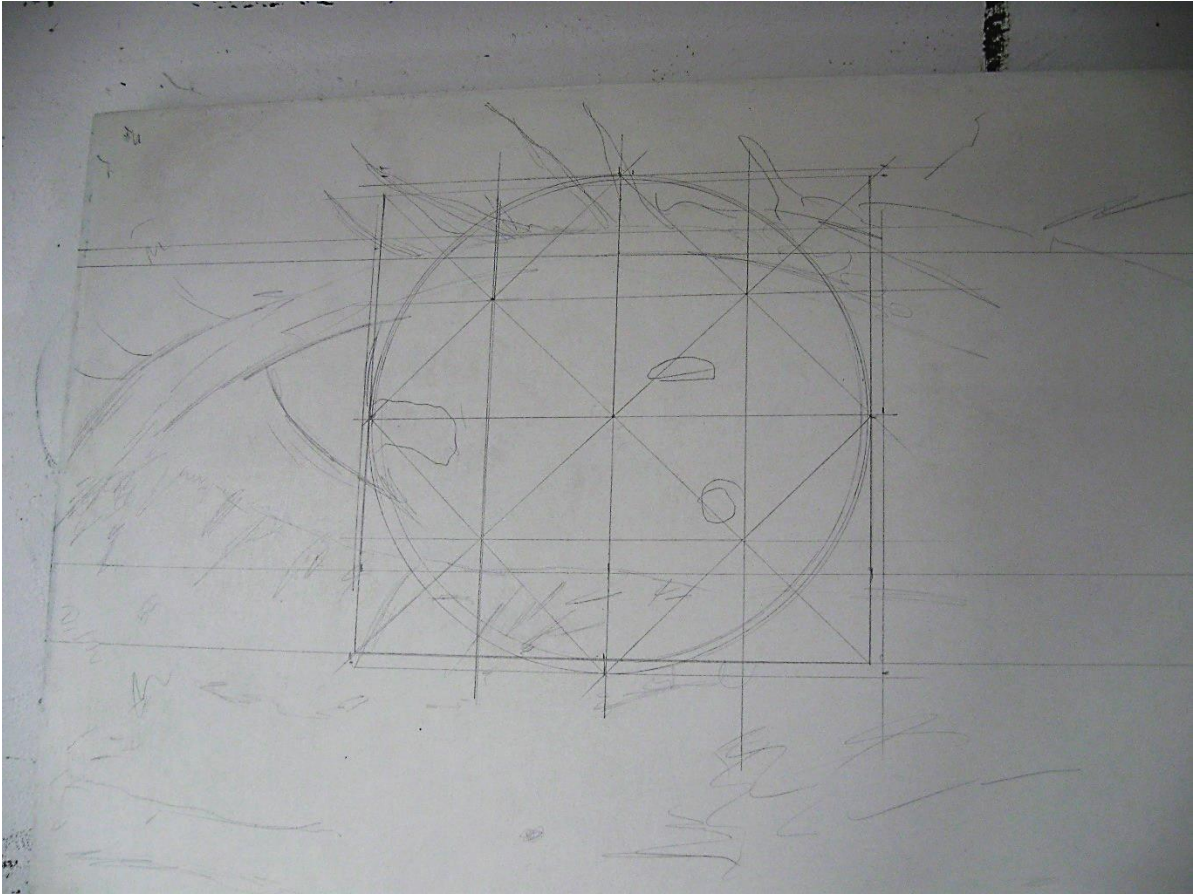


Fig.76. Face X, (in progress, detail), grid structure around right iris.

Throughout this stage additional visual data was acquired through the analysis of my facial features. This information was gathered using a bathroom mirror providing five times magnification and a handheld tweezing mirror, at ten times magnification. The mirror images could provide immediate information which could be drawn or painted directly on to the canvas.

The use of multiple photographic images obtained at different times and under varied lighting conditions meant that greater consideration had to be given to achieving a sense of unity throughout the image. A miniature, life sized study of the compositional image was produced that laid out the colours that would be used in the final painting. The method of colourisation was conducted in a similar manner to that described in 9.4.2 with layers of paint being gradually built up across the surface.

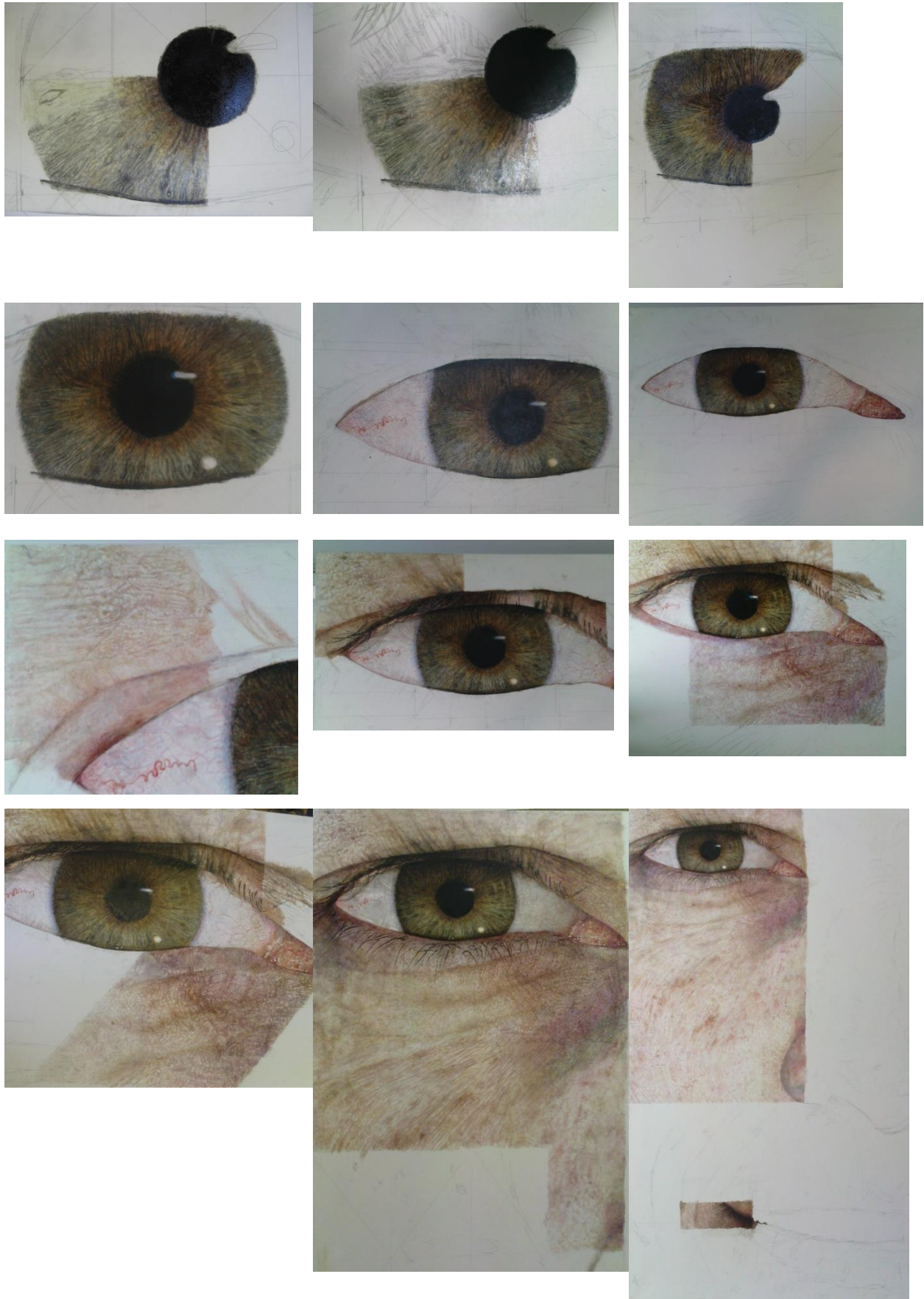


Fig.77. *Face X*, in (progress, details): a selection of photographs detailing the transpositional stage of *Face X*.

The palette used in the production of this work employed more naturalistic hues than had been used in *Face IX*. It was feared that the dramatic increase in size could result in a loss of connection between the viewer and the depicted surface; it was a concern that the image could appear to be too alien if the integral colours were exaggerated to the extent they had been previously. This resulted in increasingly naturalistic skin tones being utilised to provide a stronger link between the illusory image and the actuality of the bodily surface.

10.5. Conclusions

In terms of diminishing the communicative effects of the image, the integration of my facial details with those of another allowed for greater concentration on the particularities of my facial surface while avoiding the potential for the image to be interpreted as a self-portrait. The blending of two differently gendered subjects also served to disrupt any gender identification within the final painting, which, therefore, inhibited prejudicial physiognomic interpretations of the subject.

The additional technologies and techniques employed in lighting and photography provided a wealth of visual data beyond anything previously obtained. The increased levels of magnification and sophistication meant that a wealth of visual information could be acquired and this information could then be applied to the canvas in a considered and strategic manner.

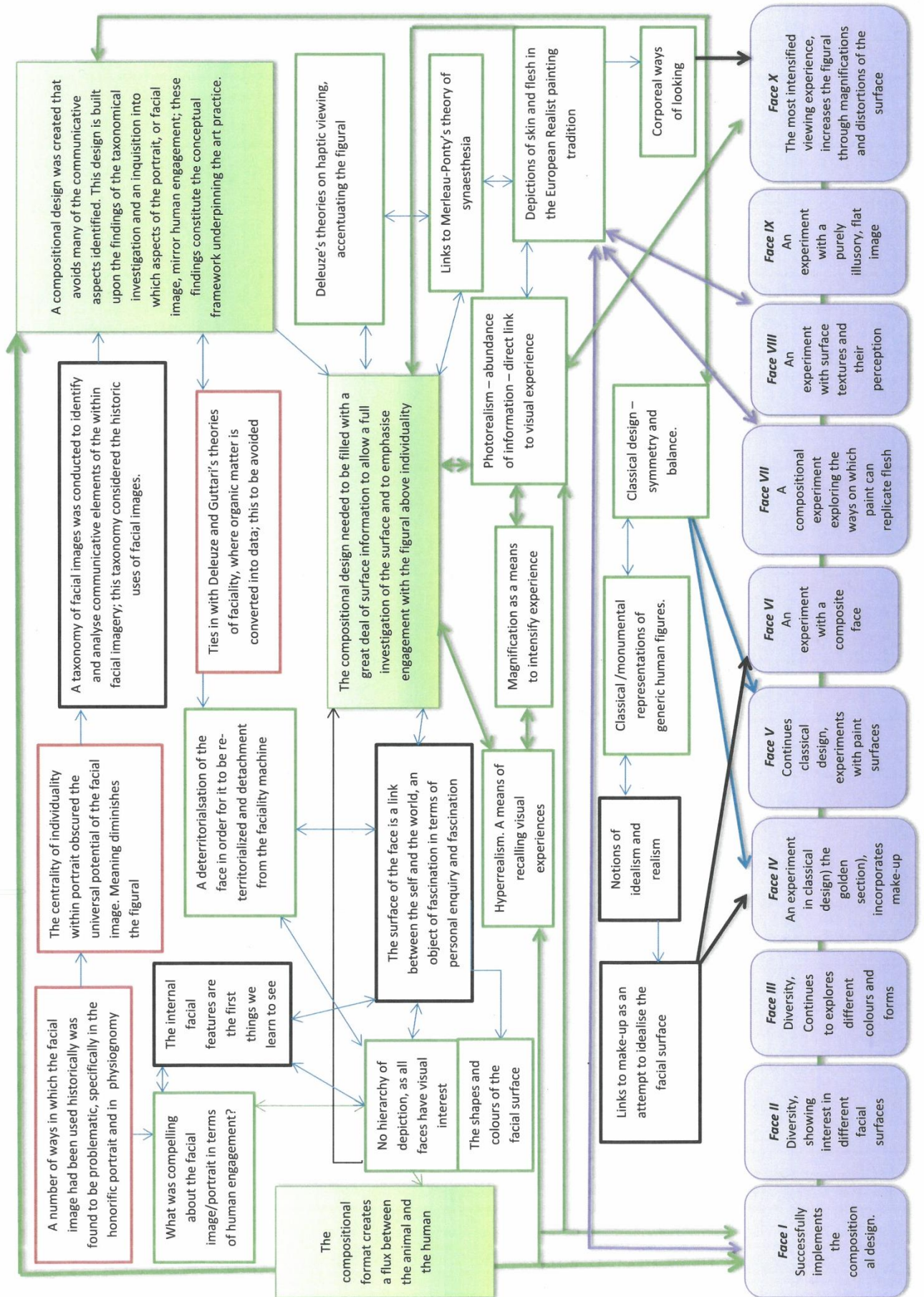
The scale of the image enhanced the proximity based alterations in perception observed in 1.5, with the details of the image becoming apparent at a greater distance. The closer the viewer came to the image the more detail they could discern, until they could make out the microscopic details covering the surface. The finely painted details, enabled, in part, by the primed linen surface, retained their illusory appearance up to a very close range. It was only at a range of approximately five centimetres from the surface that the illusion broke and the traces of the painter's touch became perceptible.

The fluctuations in scale and focal points achieved a relatively successful approximation of a corporeal way of looking. It is impossible to fully replicate the complexities of human perception within a static two dimensional image, however the shifts in scale and focus used in this painting did provide an analogy of a sustained viewing processes. A photographic image is capable of shifting focus to isolate and highlight documented matter; however, a photograph cannot enact shifts of scale throughout its contents; nor can the photograph achieve multifarious focal points across its surface. These effects can only be achieved through a composite of visual information that has been analysed and manipulated for this purpose.

The support and priming processes formed a suitable compromise between the demands of the surface and the physical limitations of the paintings size. The primed linen did not offer as smooth a surface as *Face IX* had, with certain areas still showing some trace of the linen's weave. It was, however, a smooth surface that allowed for very fine delineations to be implemented. The use of an oil based primer also meant that the damage *Face VII* suffered would not reoccur in this work.

The naturalistic use of colour served to enhance the connection between the bodily surface and the image describing it. This enhancement helped to compensate for the loss of the paint's physicality that had occurred when the painting technique changed from a thick painterly application, applied through studies 1-8, to the application of smooth glazes used in *Face IX* and *Face X*. To compensate for the loss of a tactile, textured surface the flatness of the surface and the use of delicate glazes facilitated greater detail, which in turn enabled a level of myopic haptic viewing that had not been achieved in the previous studies. The use of microscopic detail resulted in an increase in realistic depiction, which led to in an increase in veracity. Greater veracity resulted in an increased capacity for the image to effectively evoke the sensations experienced when engaging with the facial surface.

11. Table Outlining the Relationship between Theory and Practice



Conclusion

My original contribution to the field of portraiture is to demonstrate that a reduction of individualisation within facial imagery, in conjunction with an increase of surface information, promotes sensations within the viewer that connect to bodily experiences of vision, touch and memories of flesh and skin.

In many ways the final facial study presents the conclusion to this research project. It adapts observations, practices and methodological approaches established in the previous studies to give form to the conceptual basis of the work. *Face X* presents a best practice approach for the creation of facial images that function to produce recollections of the shared sensations and experiences generated through a sustained engagement with the human facial surface.

Collectively, the ten facial studies tested the underlying aims of the conceptual framework, to see if the conceptual grounding would effectively function as a means of inhibiting the individuating and socially classifying elements constructed around the face when given form and facilitate the evocation of the sensations experienced when analyzing the facial image. The investigations into the facial image that preceded the formation of the conceptual framework found that the face was predominately seen as an apparatus of signification within Western European visual culture. Facial imagery, in the form of the portrait, has chiefly been employed to signify individuals, their places in society and aspects of their personalities. An historic analysis of the traditions of Western European portraiture led to five elements being identified that enable the portrait to communicate aspects of identity, status, role and personality and which help frame the way facial images, in general, are received. These five elements being: the use of the conventional portrait format, that gives rise to expectations of honorific portraiture; the use of the facial image to affirm social roles, this element frequently involves situating the subject in their vocational position; the presentation of the subject in relation to the artist, intimate portraits of friends and loved ones rely on distinguishing individuals from others; the use of facial elements that allow for physiognomic interpretations, poses, facial expressions or adornments

that allude to the sitter's personality; enacted projects of self, any poses, expressions or gestures that infer something of the sitter's character. A principal objective of conceptual design was, therefore, to construct a facial image that would remove or, if abolition was not possible, inhibit as many of these elements as possible.

The conceptual design of this research project removed the portrait and physiognomic aspects from the face image to achieve a perceptual engagement with an anonymous subject, which recalled bodily experiences of skin. Studies into the way in which the human eye encounters facial images demonstrated that the eyes operate in a triangular route around the internal facial features, moving between the eyes and the mouth. This pattern highlights the importance of the internal facial features above the external features, areas peripheral to the eyes, nose and mouth, in facial engagement. In isolating the triangular formation of internal facial features the compositional design was established.

The compositional design facilitated the imaging of a non-specific face that served to transcend the individual and represent mankind in general. In signifying the general above the individual classical notions of ideal form, balance, symmetry and harmony worked in synergy with realistic depictions of the human facial surface. In constructing this amalgamation, the conceptual basis continued in an historic tradition of monumentalised images of the human form that have been a tool to aid understanding humankind and its place in the world.

It was necessary to fill the compositional design, delineating the facial features, with an abundance of visual information in order to enhance the perceived veracity of the images and to facilitate a recollection of the sensate experiences generated when scrutinising the facial surface. It was decided that the best means of filling the images with as much data as possible would be to create a composite image, uniting many close-up pictures into one facial image; by amalgamating the information contained in the source photographs each facial feature was able to be depicted in immense detail. The scale of the images was dictated by the amount of detail to be displayed; the larger the picture surface then the more information could be incorporated

into the final painting. An increase in the magnification of the source images, therefore, resulted in a proportionate increase in the size of the painting

Hyperrealist imaging strategies were employed that served to confuse the image/object relationship, this confusion resulted in the principle signifier of the image becoming displaced and, in effect, the link that bound the image to the reality it purports to represent was disrupted. In distancing the image from reality the presentation of a subjective interpretation of visual existence based on the appearances of reality is facilitated within the artworks produced for this research project. Through the displacement of the primary communicative elements within the images the viewer is given a greater freedom to interpret its contents - floating signifiers are enabled that do not have a prescribed meaning and instead allow sensations and experiences, distinct from cerebral engagement, to be directly recalled within the viewer.

As an aid to a recollection of experiencing flesh and skin, through a sensate engagement with the surface, philosophies surrounding haptic seeing and synesthesia were introduced and applied to artist's works to demonstrate how these artists have successfully integrated the visual qualities of the human subject with a tactile sense of their form. It was shown that a synergy of hyperrealist strategies could work effectively with painterly applications that enabled a mode of visceral seeing. This synergy served to reduce meaning and individualisation within facial imagery and enhance evocations and recollections of sensations and experiences felt in the perception of the human facial surface.

The ten facial studies test the basis of the conceptual framework through minor variants in its theoretical and practical structures. Variations in gender, ethnicity and race demonstrate the effectiveness of the framework in obscuring knowledge based, prejudicial assumptions about a subject based on their external characteristics. The images in which gender was suggested or affirmed, specifically *Face II*, *Face IV* and *Face VI*, served to highlight the need for signifiers of gender to be avoided.

The potency of the compositional design was affirmed in the deviations from the design enacted in *Face IV*, *Face V* and *Face VII*. The rectangular half-face and profile pictorial format demonstrated the effectiveness of the square composition in providing harmony and consistency throughout the works. The square format also facilitated a greater human connection between the viewer and the subject through the depiction of all of the internal facial features.

The textured paint applications applied throughout the first seven studies, and exaggerated in *Face VIII*, revealed the capabilities of a thick paint application in recalling the physicalities, and tactility of flesh. However, the final two studies of this project demonstrate the effectiveness of fine, layered paint applications in detailing the minute, microscopic details of the human facial surface. The smoother, flat rendering of form allowed for a greater depiction of detail, which served to recall a myopic way of looking at the facial surface. Experiments with lighting focus and scale within the final study enhanced the myopic way of looking and approximated a corporeal visual engagement with the bodily surface. The contemplation of surface minutia is an experience far removed from physiognomic signifiers of identity conventionally displayed in facial imagery and these details connect the depicted subject to a broader humanity, and animality, by highlighting the integral elements of the body.

Potential research pathways generated from this thesis

A number of potential research pathways arise from this project, areas that were under-investigated or not pursued within this project due to the parameters of the study.

The effects of cosmetic make-up under close up contemplation, observed in *Face IV* and *Face VI*, were of interest and could be explored in greater detail. A detailed visual inspection of how, under magnification, the falsity of face paint is revealed. The integral nature of the mask that is supposed to provide a means to uniform and idealise the facial surface, is revealed as a substance of oil, paste and powder that merely sits on the surface. A study of cosmetics under varying magnifications could provide an insight in to an everyday artifice.

The experiments conducted into varied densities and textured applications of paint as an evocation of illusory space merit further investigation, as do the effects of colour temperatures on depth perception. These two elements merit further investigation, in terms of their capacity to enhance the illusion of depth within two-dimensional imagery. In particular, a combination of colour, textured and smooth paint applications could be utilized to expand illusory distances between objects within the narrow confines of the facial region.

Further investigation could be carried out into hyperrealist imaging methods in the production of the hollow mask illusion. The British Artist Patrick Hughes (b.1939) has devoted a great deal of effort into producing a variety of inverse three-dimensional illusions, including producing portrait hollow mask illusions. However, the effects of an extreme level of detail on the potency of the hollow mask illusion still warrant a sustained, in depth, investigation.

There is huge potential in producing artworks that use a Hyperrealistic mode of painting in visualising idiosyncratic experiences of visual reality. As demonstrated in Chapter 3, artists working within a Hyperrealistic style can produce work that directly recalls lived visual experiences while manipulating representations of reality to recall their personal engagement with reality. This could be applied to any genre of painting, allowing artists to evoke responses to places, people and objects through a gathering, correlation and manipulation of photographic source data. Such responses would be enhanced through a reduction of specific, denotational communicative elements and an increase in connotational, sensate visual properties.

There is also potential for extended research in to the up-close image of the face and the similarities such images have to images of landscapes. A metaphorical relationship, developing upon Deleuze's comparisons detailed in Chapter 2, could be established connecting the textures and lines of the facial surface with geographic forms and themes such as age, decay, degeneration, regeneration, cultivation and manipulation could be explored.

The exploration of the human facial surface, divorced from any individuating or honorific associations, has the potential to be explored further. The potential of the imaging the human face as a multifarious surface is vast, as all human beings can provide unique source material in terms of shape, texture, tone and colour.

Imaging the variety and detail of the human body is a task that cannot be effectively concluded and will continue to generate artworks and research for as long as human beings find interest in the visuality, and visualising, of their form. The hand-crafted image is always born of a subjective engagement with existence and as such each artist investigating the human form will bring their own experiences, interests, beliefs, tastes and prejudices to bear on the way they interpret the human form. This project has been one such interpretation that aimed to evoke a sense of fascination and engagement with the minute details discernible on, and beneath, the human facial surface.

Glossary

Compositional format/design

- The arrangement of the eyes, nose and mouth within a square frame. A harmonious, symmetrical arrangement that provides the basis for the majority of the works produced.

Conceptual framework

- The theoretical basis that governs the production of the compositional format/design. The square design being founded on the conceptual idea that the facial images should negate or inhibit any individuating or physiognomic interpretations.

Dualism

- The separation of the mind from the body. With mental work being superior to physical labour.

Early modern period

- A period of time encompassing the Renaissance and the Age of Enlightenment; from the mid-fifteenth century to the late eighteenth century.

Faciality

- Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's term relating to the use of the face as a signifier in the late twentieth century. A concept not dissimilar to physiognomy, it explains how the face is used to define ourselves and others in terms of deviation from a normative, white, Western European face.

Honorific portrait

- Portraits working in the tradition of producing images that distinguish, glorify and ennoble individuals or groups.

Hyperrealism

- Initially a variety of Photorealism/Superrealism, has developed in meaning to describe artworks that provide an accentuated image of perceived reality, frequently employed to display idiosyncratic responses to visual experiences.

Hyperrealist methods

- Manipulations, correlations and distortions of photographic data in order to manufacture images directly recall visual experiences while allowing idiosyncratic responses to reality to be presented.

Physiognomy

- The notion that a person's disposition can be ascertained and analysed through their external characteristics.

Realist methods and techniques

- Refers to a European tradition of painting that seeks to capture the human bodily surface in an unidealised state. Works produced in this manner frequently utilise the substance of paint to replicate the tangible qualities of skin.

Photorealism

- Synonymous with Superrealism. A term first used by the curator and gallery owner Louis K Meisel to describe an exhibition of painting that resembled photographs, largely used in the USA.

Photorealist painting methods

- The use of paint to replicate mechanical means of image production. Also refers to a mode of painting that negates the presence of surface textures, allowing for a smooth, flat image surface.

Photorealist strategies

- Replicating photographic source material so that a painting resembles a photograph. This strategy confuses the notion of the Platonic image/object relationship, as the nature of the original object is unclear; it is not clear whether it is the photograph or the contents of the photograph that constitute the reality on which the representation is based.

Platonic image/object relationship

- The notion that an ideal, or conceptual notion of an object exists beyond its physical state and that perceived reality is an image of this ideal object. Further copies, or simulacrum, of the image are seen as insubstantial entities that lack the fundamental properties of the principle object.

Simulacrum

- A copy of a copy. A phantom that retains only the resemblance of an original object and, therefore, lacks the fundamental properties of the original. For example, an actor may convincingly portray a doctor but lack any medical knowledge. Or, an artist may draw a chair and that drawing will lack the tangible qualities of the original object.

Superrealism

- Synonymous with Photorealism. A term first used by Malcolm Morely to describe a series of paintings that were direct copies of photographs. Later the term was adopted to describe paintings that resembled photographs in general, particularly in Europe.

Synaesthesia

- Maurice Merleau-Ponty uses the term synaesthesia to describe a correlation, or an overlap, of senses experienced when perceiving reality.

Tronie

- A Dutch form of facial imaging practiced during the 1600s. Painting produced in the Tronie style deviated from the formal demands of portrait painting of that period, allowing artists greater creative freedom.

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Appendix

The Hollow Mask: An investigation into the effects of a hyperrealist rendering of surface detail within a hollow mask

The hollow mask (or hollow face) illusion is an example of depth inversion; where a concave mask appears to be convex when viewed from a distance. The image also appears to follow the viewer's movements. It is an old illusion; Richard .L Gregory (1923-2010) proposes that ancient temple miracles can be attributed to this phenomenon.¹⁷³ This illusion has been used to support a hypothesis suggesting that vision comes through the processing of two sources of information: one from the corporeal world received through the retina (bottom up) and the other knowledge based (top down). The hollow mask demonstrates how top down information alters depth perception in order to comply with a learned and indeed natural way of seeing the human face.

The initial aim of this project is to see whether a hyperrealist rendering of facial detail onto a hollow mask significantly increases the vigour of the illusion. This continues on from the perceptual research into the effects of lighting, shadow and painting on the illusion and the effects of distance and time.¹⁷⁴ The hyperrealist element involves an initial appraisal of the effectiveness of paint in conveying the complexities of skin over that of other representational mediums. This continues from my own research into two dimensional, highly detailed,

¹⁷³ Richard Gregory, "The confounded eye," in Richard Gregory and Ernst Gombrich eds., *Illusion in Nature and Art* (London: Duckworth, 1973), 49-95.

¹⁷⁴For an account of lighting effects and painting on the hollow face illusion see: Hill, H and Bruce V, "Independent effects of lighting, orientation, and stereopsis on the hollow-face illusion," *Perception* 22, no.8 (1993):887-97; for the effects of distance and time see: Papatomas,T.V and Bono, L.M, "Experiments with a hollow mask and a reverspective: Top - down influences in the inversion effect for 3-D stimuli" *Perception* 33, no.9, (2004): 1129 – 1138.

depictions of human faces, as well as research conducted by artists with similar concerns, in particular Chuck Close, Lucien Freud, Jenny Saville and Ron Mueck.

There may be potential for the hyperrealist element to come into conflict with the illusion as they rely on opposite ways of seeing. The illusion is subject to a time limit, as the bottom up information adjusts the image from the illusionary to the veridical after a period.¹⁷⁵

Hyperrealism, however, relies on a sustained viewing period as the myriad of detail takes some time to be distinguished within the whole. This may be problematic as the believability of the realism will rely on the face being seen as convex rather than concave. Another potential conflict arises in space. The hollow mask illusion relies on distance, whereas hyperrealism relies on proximity in order to fully appreciate the minutia of the painted subject.

It is hoped that the hyperrealist element will contribute to producing as vigorous an illusion as possible. A fairly basic facial image with an inverted object increases the vigour of the illusion.¹⁷⁶ It therefore follows that an increase in detail will increase the naturalism of the mask and makes the illusion more likely to uphold the top down suppression of depth perception. The mask will also be painted with shadows consistent with lighting from above; this will also contribute to the vigour of the illusion.¹⁷⁷ The actual lighting will be multi-directional in order to avoid any shadows being cast that conflict with the painted shadows. To further preserve the illusion the mask may be filled in with a transparent substance which would also contribute to the illusion power due to light refraction.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ Paphomas and Bono "Experiments with a hollow mask and a reverspective," 1135-1136.

¹⁷⁶ Hill, H and Bruce V, "A comparison between the hollow-face and 'hollow-potato' illusions," *Perception* 23, no.11 (1994): 1335-7; and Paphomas and Bono "Experiments with a hollow mask and a reverspective," 1130.

¹⁷⁷ Paphomas and Bono "Experiments with a hollow mask and a reverspective," 1130.

¹⁷⁸ See: Wolfgang Dultz, "The Bust of the Tyrant: an optical illusion," *Applied Optics* 23, issue 2(1984): 200-203.

The second aim is to consider the philosophical potential in combining hyperrealism with the hollow mask illusion. In hyperrealist painting and sculpture the accurate representation of the human form acts as a facsimile of the viewer and therefore elicits an emotional response. The complexities of the skin act as a *memento mori* in that the traces on the surface display the passage of time. It is here that an otherness inherent within the human condition is brought to bear, as the skin heals, scars, wrinkles and renews itself - beyond conscious thought, and beyond control.

The hollow mask illusion relies on processes beyond the viewer's control to function. Through a combination of a highly detailed representation of the human face with the three dimension illusion of the hollow mask, the external functionality and the internal perceptual process (which cannot be visualised) are signified.

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