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**'An Investigation by Practice into the Psychological
Potential of the Portrait'**

by

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Abstract

The research investigated how do portraits offer insights into the human situation of the sitter and the artists?

How does introspection and memory influence and reflect on the artist's work?

The work considers my own history and subjective states, who and what am I through the form of portraiture?

The literature used has shown historical examples of portraiture from the cannon of art investigated can reveal psychological understanding of the human condition and how artists explore unconscious drives and impulses through their art.

The research methods have been through discourse, observational drawing, photography, etching and prints.

Materials used in the print making process and relevant to my practice are indicated in the researcher's Journal.

In conjunction with the research I have interviewed four professional artists and investigated how and why they work in a particular way opening out the interviews onto the broadest questions about their practice.

The four artists' interviewed and the researcher's own history have been examined with the implication of the research being; that artists having a dialogue, relationship and a sense of connection with the sitter enhanced their work; this had been by offering insights and truths into the situation of the sitters' and the artists', the artists' employing a form of communication about themselves and about their relationships when working.

The artists' expressed thoughts, feelings, tensions and injustice in their work which they had spoken about, the work transformed through the artists' recollections and emotional states both past and present which they conveyed via pencil, charcoal, brush and paint.

Although the samples in the research had been small this research illuminates and advances our understanding of how artists work relaying truths as they see it onto the work and subsequently onto the finished portrait giving us knowledge in a unique and specific way.

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‘An Investigation by practice into the psychological potential of the portrait’

The research is an investigation by practice into the psychological potential of the portrait. I am seeking to answer questions through my own practice as an artist/printmaker regarding:

- How do portraits offer insights into the human situation of the sitter and the artist?
- How does introspection and memory influence and reflect on an artist’s work?

Introspection by definition is observation and examination of one’s own mental and emotional states and the exposure of these memories may be transferred and transformed in creating art. But the exposure of the memories through art is arguably no longer introspective but public exposed in the light. This transformation can offer a reason to make art and to share those sensations through art.

Secondary research questions are:

- To examine my own history and subjective states through the form of portraits. How through my artistic practice can I examine my own history, who and what I am through the form of portrait?
- How do artists I know employ the portrait as a form of communication about themselves and about their relationship with the sitter and with others? There is also the question of difference between the observed portrait and portraits from the remembered, or could artists’ work be a combination of the two, observed and remembered portraits?
- Another question poses itself as to what historical examples of portraiture from the canon of art reveal psychological understanding of the human condition and how do artists explore unconscious drives and impulses through their art? How do they do this?

I considered the hypothesis that artists having a dialogue with the sitter enhance the work by offering insights into the situation of the sitter. Also by researching the artists own communication about themselves and about their relationship with the sitter, the work perhaps being transformed through the artists’ recollection and emotional states both past and present of themselves.

The research is through discourse, observational drawing, etching prints and photographing a group of people who meet regularly who have a common interest. Clearly I have not known this group of people for any length of time and decided, as a comparison to the research, to work with people who I know very well who have shared histories and memories with me.

If I know people well does that create a response from me which changes my images helping the work and bringing a deeper understanding and sense of the person to the work? I was looking for understanding which had not been initially obvious as the process of creating visual imagery probes below the level of the rational mind as unanticipated connections may be discovered: for example why I chose a particular person to portray them in a particular way and if memory and introspection or any other influences may have transformed the work.

In conjunction with my practice I interviewed professional artists researching how and why they work in a particular way. This is relevant to the evaluation and judgement of the research and an area that required intense investigation, as at times being an artist is a lived experience beyond words, as we help shape the images we make and through this research we may discover a deeper understanding about ourselves and others. Included in the research there had been an historical survey of significant examples of portraiture.

The selected historical examples are primarily artists who have experienced trauma, a childhood that may have affected their practice and any other influences that may be revealed, giving an understanding of their practice.

Methodology

The research follows an approach with my art driving the research and the research in turn driving the practice. I had chosen a multi method approach which is a mixing of two or more methods: a gathering, selecting and editing of materials with careful selection and critical reflection. This includes qualitative and ethnographic research methods which introduces openness and vulnerability and gives a voice to the people interviewed. Nelson argues (p.9) “practice as research projects require more labour and a broader range of skills to engage in a multimode research inquiry than more traditional research”. Nelson adds “knowledge which is a matter of doing rather than abstractly conceived and thus able to be articulated by way of a traditional thesis in words alone.”

To obtain artists who would consider taking part in the research I approached tutors from the university, artists who I knew and also members of The Royal Society of Portrait Painters and the Society of Women Artists. The response had been varied and after many delays and negotiations four artists whose practice included portraiture agreed to take part in the research these were Jason Bowyer, Kathryn Rennie, Melissa Scott Miller and Dawn Cole.

The artists’ interviews encompassed loosely structured face to face interviews attempting to explore and understand the artists’ world from their point of view. I had chosen this approach as I wanted our interviews during the discussions to open out onto the broadest questions regarding the artists’ work which would enable comparison between their practice and my own. This could possibly illuminate a common thread between artists, producing knowledge in a unique and specific way as well as identifying differences. Interviews were recorded in the artists’ home or studio and transcribed, with extracts of the interviews being included in the researcher’s writing.

With regard to the method of analysing the interview data the focus had been on content analysis with some of the considerations in developing codes derived from Loftland & Loftland (1995 p.481). This meant establishing a set of categories and then analysing the number of instances they fell into each category, approaching the texts for what they were. The researcher looked for particular outcomes in the talk which provided a general sense, a reference for example, clarification, responses, laughter and working back to see how this

was produced in the transcription or replaying the tape to ensure nothing else had been missed.

As Blumer (1954 pp. 3-10) argues the researcher does not want the concept developed to become a straightjacket as fine nuances in the form of the concept could have been lost. The strength of opinion as well as themes and patterns of speech and meaning were taken into account during the analysis, although patterns of speech can mean different things to different people, for example an absent father can mean he is working or has left the family home. My father had been absent a lot during my childhood but he had not left the family home. To validate findings is to question whatever narrative or story is received and experienced from the interviews as whatever story we get it is only a partial truth making any findings themes.

The outcome of the interpretation of the data may generate and contribute to existing knowledge giving a deeper interpretation of how artists work: this may facilitate an understanding of what portraiture can be a triangular relationship between the artist, the sitter and the viewer as well as giving more insight into my and other artists' creativity.

Part of the research question informing the methodology had been, for example are the sitters the dominant role for the artists or are they stripping away the detritus that stops them seeing the hidden self of the sitters, or how much of the artists' own selves are influencing the work? The communication between artist and sitter can capture the animation and soul of the sitter, the artist breathing life into the portrait. Sometimes the viewer sees no likeness to the sitter in the portrait when first viewed but if they look deeply or perhaps view the work later often they can then see the essence of the person has been captured, a triangulation of sitter, artist, and viewer.

Also coupled with analysis of the interviews will be an examination of the researcher's work connecting inner and outer worlds which draws on psychology, sociology and cultural theory on learning and change process (Merrill & West 2009 p.68). This will be enabled through the monthly journals that will be kept as well as my autobiography.

The researcher also questioned responses from the artists during interviews and questioned her own work as well as research through reading and looking at work that is creative and informative. She has attended lectures, with lecture handouts, researched journals and secondary investigations have been from the media, DVDs, videos and the internet.

Ethics

In considering ethics there is the necessity regarding bias and to be aware of leading questions during interviews which may inadvertently influence the participants' answers during the interviews. The researcher's presence may also influence each participant's behaviour and the researcher controls the situation to a certain extent and introduces the topic. Artists being interviewed were asked if they wanted to hear the recorded interview or to have a copy of the transcription but none of the four artists interviewed wished to do so.

The interviews explored the artist's work which was open to question about their practice, ethics forms were used regarding their consent and to what use the recorded interviews would be used for. I had explored with each participant the research process explaining how I would use the information and where it would be lodged within the university. None of the artists wished to remain anonymous regarding the research and were agreeable to using their full names within the research. I confirmed I would be available regarding any questions or queries about the interviews throughout my research. The analysis of the interview data also included analysis of my own practice.

The group of people and people I knew well who took part in the research have signed ethics forms which had been fully explained to them. I also explained I would protect their anonymity although they all agreed for the use of their given name or the first letter of their given name in the research.

All the ethics forms completed by the participants have been approved by the appropriate university body prior to participants taking part in the research. All participants have been given a copy of the ethics consent form with a signed participant copy.

The researcher gave due consideration to the artists' interviewed regarding, objectivity and freedom from bias as Denzin & Lincoln (2003 p.343) argue, "the open ended interview apparently offers the opportunity for an authentic gaze into the soul of another" which "treats interview data as accessing various stories or narratives through which people describe their worlds."

The research subject under discussion has had an impact regarding my own work with recognition of how one's childhood and family have a bearing on all we do. The research

has made me think deeply regarding my upbringing and all its influences with possibly the reason for the concept and subsequent research. The following is a brief autobiography of my childhood.

Autobiography

An examination of my childhood has revealed the continuous thread running through it to adulthood, a questioning, a revelation and interpretation revealing my inner world to show my view of the outer world, sometimes knowing and sometimes not knowing connecting inner and outer worlds as Merrill & West argue (2009 p.68).

I understood my childhood had influenced my choice of career and subsequently my artistic practice as there had been family webs and intrigues that I had not been aware of as a child which nevertheless shaped me, but this was only apparent in retrospect.

Although we experience our lives through the lens of the present whatever story we have is only partial. Bearing this in mind, the first memory I have is sitting on floor boards in a large room looking at the dust floating and dancing within a stream of sunlight. Reflecting on this I must have only been about 2 or 3 years of age but I was perfectly content and felt safe and secure although lonely as I kept looking around for someone, who I do not know.

Dr. John Bowlby, family and child psychiatrist and author noted for his pioneering work on attachment theory and studies on childhood development and temperament concludes (1989 p.1 & p.110), “successful parenting is a principal key to the mental health of the next generation” with “a central feature of my concept of parenting – the provision by both parents of a secure base from which a child or adolescent can make sorties into the outside world and to which he can return knowing for sure that he will be welcomed when he gets there,”

Regarding my childhood I realise now I had a secure base and had been very much loved but overprotected, for example at home I had not been allowed to read books only comics until later attending senior school. This era 1950s was a golden age for children’s comics such as *The Beano*, *Dandy* and American comics with action heroes like Batman and Superman. Research has found reading was a vastly different experience for most children in the 1940s and 1950s than it is for young people today. (McNicol 2007 pp.1-3), had looked at various studies citing “the problem” of comics advising “good” books as an “antidote to comics”. Even academic studies from the period found the physical form of comic books did so in ways that disinclined the library collection development of comics.

Now there is a vast amount of different choices and experiences for example, more ways to obtain reading matter and books and more authors to choose from as well as these being relatively cheap, although there is a much wider choice of activities with media competing for children's time. Because of this greater effort has been made to engage children in books today and to encourage them to read.

Mother's reasoning by not allowing me to read books only comics had I understood books would overtax my brain and cause headaches. Mother suffered terribly with headaches, usually prior to an epileptic seizure. During this period the 1940s there had been a terrible accident which had involved mother and subsequently she had been committed to a hospital asylum and given a series of electric shock treatments. After her discharge from hospital she returned home and eventually I was conceived.

When I had been approximately 3 years of age my parents were made homeless through poverty, I understood later it had been a question of paying the rent or eating, so we ate. Subsequently I had been sent to stay with relatives I had never met who had 2 children older than me. My parents rented one room in another town and I visited them occasionally. Mother visited me at my home usually every 4 weeks bringing small gifts which were usually pounced upon by the two children I lived with after the visit. I recall I did not mind sharing the gifts as it made me popular with them. My stay with the relatives lasted nearly 3 years until my parents were rehoused. Eventually I returned home to live with my parents which felt strange at first after being surrounded by a much larger family and with two children to play with, although adjustments were made I had much less freedom, not being allowed out to play or to visit school friends or to play in the park without an adult. I realise now it must have been at times a lonely childhood in comparison to my own children's upbringing.

Mother's epilepsy continued which I knew nothing about until I reached the age of 8 years. My older sister who by then was in her twenties asked me to enter the kitchen, which had been the room mother went to when having one of her headaches, mother had been sitting on a chair with my father nearby as when mother had one of her 'headaches' I had always been shut out of the kitchen my questions and fears not being answered. They began to speak about mother and her headaches explaining that were 'epileptic fits' and if she was out alone when having a 'fit' she had always been taken to hospital. But now I was older if she went shopping I would accompany her and be there to help if she had a 'fit', I could

then look after her and they both told me what to do before bringing Mother home. This seemed at the time a perfectly reasonable thing to me and a very easy thing to do, to care for mother and I had been relieved it had been something so simple. I would be a carer for mother when out shopping with her or when we were alone in the house.

If we look at The Children's Society (Hounsell, 2013 p.6), they have stated "a young carer becomes vulnerable when the level of care-giving and responsibility to the person in need of care becomes excessive or inappropriate for that child, risking impacting on his or her emotional or physical well-being or educational achievement and life chances". For me as a young child I felt a responsibility had been given to me to help and support mother and as far as I could tell it had not impacted on my education or physical well being. Emotionally it had, as we were isolated, friendless and I had to keep mother's epilepsy secret in case the neighbours' found out.

Phelan, Link, Stueve, Pescosolido argue (2000 p. 188), "In the 1950s the public defined mental illness in much narrower and more extreme terms than did psychiatry, and fearful and rejecting attitudes toward people with mental illnesses were common".

While Aldridge & Becker (1999 p.305), had investigated disability and parental illness in the 1950s and 1970s their outcome had been: "medical research originating in the early 50s and looked at parental illness and disability, while the social model of disability literature, originating in the late 1970's, redefined the concepts of illness and disability. The former was primarily concerned with the nature of the illness/disability experienced by the parent and its emphasis in terms of outcomes for the family and domestic life was essentially negative. The latter rejected the medical paradigm and outcomes of the early medical research, and was concerned with the needs and rights of disabled people and their experiences of 'disabling barriers' in society."

In understanding the support available in the 1950s we can perceive how the support mother received during this period had been whatever was available. This had been medical support only as no social or practical support had been considered necessary for any parental illness or disability until much later. The early medical studies during the 1960s and 70s highlighted the negative impact of parental illness or disability and viewed physical and mental impairment as a crisis for the family.

Reflecting on ‘disabling barriers’ in society as an adult I realised that coupled with mother’s illness, the trauma of her institutionalization which I had no knowledge of until after her death at the age of 89, there had been secrecy and shame. We had no close friends or neighbours and extended family did not visit us. I later understood no one would be allowed to visit us unless they knew about mother’s epilepsy. The therapist Violet Oaklander in her book *Windows to our Children* discusses, in understanding the struggles of a grown-up world adults often exclude children from information and expression leaving them in confusion. I paused when writing this remembering my struggles as a child to understand that grown-up world. It occurred to me during my childhood I had often been confused and unable to understand but not daring to question.

On looking at how mother had been viewed by extended family, friends and neighbours we would need to look at the stigma attached to disability and mental health throughout history. Shovon argues (2011 p.1043), “In the early 20th C the link of epilepsy to degeneration and to mental disorder resulted in enormous stigma and culminated in eugenic measures to restrict reproduction and ultimately the murder of handicapped persons.” The 1913 passing of the Mental Incapacity Act in Britain led to around 40,000 men and women being locked away having been deemed feeble minded or morally defective and the treatment of disabled children and adults being plentiful regarding the violation of fundamental human rights. Not all disabled people during this time lived in institutions as some lived independently in the community or with their families as mother had. But living outside an institution did not guarantee respect or dignity as throughout history disabled people have been denied a voice.

My mother had been institutionalized during the 1940s after Lucio Bini’s development of electro convulsive therapy in 1938 became popular among British doctors. Bini developed the idea by using electricity as a substitute for the drug Metrazel and believed passing an electric current through the brain was a quick and cheap way of producing a shock in patients in order to cure them. Doctors also regularly practiced psycho surgery: the most common form was leucotomies or lobotomies first developed by Egas Moniz who in 1949 won the Nobel Prize for his development of this procedure. Despite the serious side effects more than 10,000 lobotomies were carried out in the 12 years from 1942, (Brignell 2016 pp 2-13). Today lobotomies have been discredited and not considered as a treatment although electro convulsive therapy is still practiced today.

In conveying the historical view of disability and mental health during the late 1940s and 50s and looking at the institutionalisation and the populace view of disabled people it is no wonder my family kept the 'shameful secret' of mother's epilepsy and detainment in hospital.

Class divisions were clearly reflected in how people dressed during this period as well as how they spoke. Working men wore caps and clothes appropriate to manual labour while middle class men were distinguished by their white collars, suits and bowler hats.

There was a similar division between working women who wore scarves on their heads with middle class women wearing hats not scarves.

Manual work had always been father's occupation and he dressed accordingly. He had always worked taking little part in my upbringing in the family home leaving it mainly to mother although I knew he cared and loved me.

My history and experiences as a child connected as an adult and eventually led me to the Research MA with regard to my own creative processes. In looking at my own practice working in portraiture I question, who and what am I through the form of portraiture? Can portraiture offer insights and does meaning and introspection influence the work? Could interviewing and interpreting other artists' practices offer fresh or new knowledge and help my understanding of my own work.

Historical examples of portraiture.

As a comparative biography to my own memories and influences, research has been completed on historical examples of portraiture where artists' childhood experiences or any other influences help us reach a psychological understanding of their practice. Selected artists were primarily artists who had experienced for example trauma, a childhood that may have affected their work as well as identifying their unconscious drives and impulses through art and where did these come from?

Although the researcher had been raised during the last year and aftermath of the Second World War the memories and discourse of her mother's experiences of World War One and Two as well as the trauma and stigma attached to her mother illness have influenced the researcher's life and work.

Regarding mother's experiences of war and poverty one of the artists I chose to look at had been Kathe Kollwitz a German painter, printer and sculptor working before and during the First World War and Second World War. Kollwitz had been greatly influenced by poverty and the pity and horror of war as at the turn of the twentieth century in Germany capitalists were producing a great deal of money for Germany and for themselves, but it was a great deal of misery for people who had flocked to Berlin for work in the factories.

These people worked 12 hours a day for low wages and at night were crowded into inadequate tenements with children of 12 years and upwards working alongside parents sometimes their children serving as the family breadwinners.

Kollwitz was deeply concerned about the conditions of the poor she saw everyday in her husband's surgery and all around her in Berlin completing in 1900 'The Downtrodden' and in 1903 'Women with Dead Child' Fig 1, both of these etchings prior to the First World War.

Fig. 1 Woman with Dead Child.

Etching.

Kathe Kollwitz 1903



This etching presents a dead child laying bone white and fine featured between its mother's thighs, the mother bending over the child caught in what would be every parent's nightmare. Shadows and sorrow permeates the whole etching. Her images have all the horror of protest art responding to the upheavals of the twentieth century. Kollwitz also produced many posters one of them a poster depicting the housing crisis in Berlin during 1912 Fig. 2. The poster appeals for funds and underneath Kollwitz drawing were her words written in German, "600,000 Berliners live in apartments in which five or more persons are living. Some hundred thousand children live in tenement housing without playgrounds". (Kearns 1976 p.130).

Kearns argues this poster greatly upset the status quo as Kollwitz had highlighted the unstable economic problems due to the lead up to the First World War and its impact on families, refugees, housing and the political repression during this period. Her work addresses the social ills with the most powerful means available at her disposal, her art. The imaginary made readily available for public consumption.

Fig. 2 Housing Crisis Poster.

Kathe Kollwitz 1912



Kearns again argues (1976 p.130) Kaiser Wilhelm II repeatedly denounced Kollwitz describing her work as “art of the gutter” and ordered posters to be removed on the grounds these incited class hatred.

Alice Miller writes how Kollwitz’ mother often spoke about her first born child who died a year after he was born. Miller describes that Kollwitz mother’s awareness is blurred when speaking about her first born. “Her eyes grown moist” (1969 p.34) and this happened nearly 60 years after the baby’s death. Miller asserts, “Kollwitz lived in the shadow of her mother’s grief and the theme of mother and dead child keeps repeating” (1969 p.32) and we could say influenced her work.

If we look at Miller’s writing there are other influences on Kollwitz’ work. How she used drawing, etching and sculpture as an instrument of social and political commitment with her portrayal of the anguish and plight of the impoverished and injured. The print studio and her husband’s medical practice had been in the family home making her even more acutely aware of the issues during this period. Kollwitz insights into life are sharp and authentic integrating the social, emotional, ethical and political issues that were motivated by political unrest. (Oxford 2007 -2017 pp.1-3).

In 1916 Kollwitz drew ‘Anguish’ or as it is sometimes called; ‘The Widow’ Fig.3. The author and journalist Martha Kearns writes (1976 p.138), “A pregnant working-class woman, gaunt and harried, stands nearly full length before us; her large knuckled hands,

cupped to hold and embrace, reach out limply in empty space. The woman is shocked and despondent from mourning; the woman is Kollwitz, who felt the widow's grief through the loss of her own son; the poor woman's desolation is her own."

Fig. 3 The Widow. Drawing charcoal.

Kathe Kollwitz 1916



I cannot disagree with Kearns review although Kollwitz' grief comes also from the poverty and the human suffering all around her. Kollwitz' intensive artistic engagement with the period of war and the death of her son make it clear her work was shaped greatly by her personal life and by events and emotions she had experienced directly during her lifetime.

To move us when we look at art the artist must embody in their work some deep personal emotional experience which includes the ugly and beautiful, which Kollwitz has accomplished, although we can also bring our own personal emotions that have been triggered by the work.

Kollwitz' practice is driven by her own emotions and the human suffering all around her as well as by her introspection and self reflection, a self analysis perhaps as deep as Freud's analysis of his own inner world.

Freud and Kollwitz were working during the time when the human condition in all its facets had become a subject of exploration, psychoanalysis being developed looking at

what was taking place within the mind arising from one's experience other than rational thought or observation, an unconscious mental process.

The researcher's practice can be linked to her own emotions with 'triggers' of reflection and exploration in the work as well as looking into the psyche of the individual sitters, this can be through discourse and the researcher's sensations and responses to and from the sitters. Linking into this is the deep emotional experience which comes from the researcher's childhood in caring for her mother, the stigma of her mother's epilepsy, the isolation of the extended family and friends, albeit partially a self isolation to hide what others perceived as shame.

The artist Alberto Giacometti's work had been influenced and driven in a different way to Kollwitz during the 1930s as although he had always drawn and painted during this period he represented important contributions to Surrealists' sculpture. I would like to concentrate on this particular period as it explores themes from Freud's psychoanalysis of sexuality, obsession and trauma, the work being influenced by primitive art. Giacometti took part and exhibited for the Surrealists art dealer Pierre Loeb in 1930 alongside Arp, Miro, Dali and Breton. Giacometti created disagreeable objects such as 'Woman with Her Throat Cut' 1932, 'The Surrealist Table' 1933, with 'Disagreeable Object' 1931 Fig.4 produced at the height of his involvement with Surrealism depicting a smooth carved wood phallus with pointed tip which embodies opposing forces of desire and menace.

Fig. 4 Disagreeable
Object.

Sculpture, material
wood.

Alberto Giacometti 1931



Giacometti called his disagreeable objects, objects without pedestal and without value with themes of “sexual aggression, cruelty and death were pursued in sculpture which were placed directly on the floor, without a pedestal”, (Schneider 2008 p.17). The Surrealist movement believed that art should be mere things, objects without value distancing them from the realm of traditional sculpture, the objects intended to be touched and displayed in different positions.

Although Giacometti had always from a very young age proclaimed “drawing is the basis of everything” *The Bruno Giacometti Bequest* (2014 p.61), after his Surrealist period he resumed painting and exhibited paintings and drawings with drawings of passers by leading him to a new concept of the human figure, elongated stick like figures striding along, these drawings probably a precursor to his new figurative sculptures after World War Two.

Fig. 5 Figures in a City Square.

Pencil on uncoated paper.

Alberto Giacometti 1947

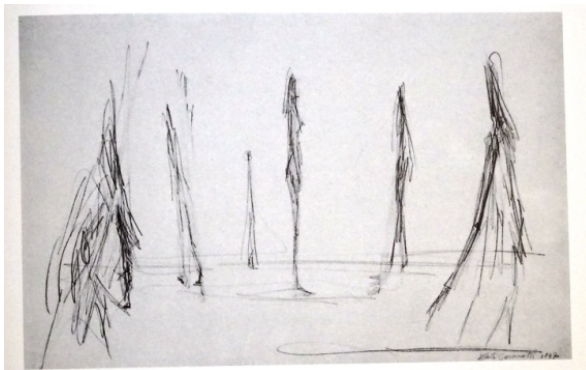
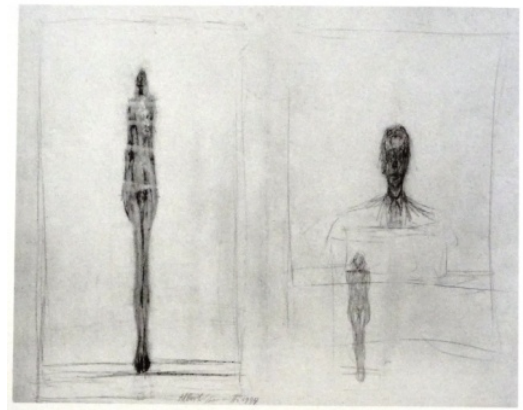


Fig. 6 Two Standing Figures and a Head.

Pencil on uncoated paper.

Alberto Giacometti 1947



Giacometti’s work ‘City Square’ and ‘Man Pointing’ being informed by a group of twentieth-century existentialist philosophies emerging at that time, these were concerned with the meaning of life through an individual’s free will and that we are ultimately responsible for ourselves. It advocates it is up to us to create an ethos of personal responsibility outside any branded belief system and seeks to discover a universal meaning; this struck a chord with the pervasive post-war feeling of despair. During this time he met and befriended the French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre, Sartre’s friends

became fascinated with Giacometti's conversation and as an artist, Schneider argues (2008 p.23) Giacometti was "in search for the absolute". Sartre was to use this as a title for an essay on him with Giacometti's thoughts finding their way into Sartre's principal philosophical work *Being & Nothingness* 1943. Sartre also writing the introductory text to Giacometti's exhibition in New York in 1948 and 50 describing Giacometti's work as always halfway between being and nothingness.

Fig. 7 City Square, Bronze Sculpture.
Alberto Giacometti 1948



Fig. 8 Man Pointing, Bronze Sculpture.
Alberto Giacometti 1948



During an interview with David Sylvester in 1964, two years before Giacometti's death, Giacometti discussed how he made a large quantity of sculptures from memory in the late 40s and 50s.

These were tall thin figures of walking men, standing women, heads and a combination of these. In talking about working from memory compared to working from life. Giacometti was asked how he seemed to take his work from life more seriously than work from memory, as his sculptures from memory have generally been narrower than those completed from life. Giacometti replied:

“On the whole, yes because they get narrower despite myself. From life, they do this less. But, in fact working from life I’ve never pushed things far enough [...] It’s the same thing with the heads from life; they have three or four times too much substance. The ones from memory are more right in a way” (1981p.10).

“one always sees much more than one can cope with, so one gets lost in too many complications. In working from memory one tries to retain what has struck one most forcibly”, (pp.10 -11).

Giacometti’s art conversely suggests the 20th C philosophies of alienation and loneliness reducing human bodies to its barest state. Ideas about self consciousness and how we relate to each other, an isolation of individual experiences in a universe indifferent, these philosophies coming at a time during and after the horrors of war and the racial ideology of Nazism. Giacometti also being influenced by memory as his interview with David Sylvester suggests.

By and large my reflections regarding self consciousness and how we relate to one another suggests a multilayered history with manifestations of relationships, memory, imagination, errors and failings all embodied within the work portrayed. At times my work is a conscious effort at other times I am unaware of where some of the influences come from revealing an unconscious drive perhaps at a later date to be revealed. Martin Heidegger (1977 p.3) writes,“Questioning builds a way [...]the way is a way of thinking [...] revealing rather than representing the knowledge field.” Perhaps the world is a tool to distract us from our own internal thoughts.

In recalling Giacometti’s drawings as a precursor to his sculptures, coming from my drawings were etchings which had been transformed into something at times quite different for example Fig. 9 & 10.

Sonia. Fig. 9 Drawing

Charcoal on paper. J. Nolan 2017



Sonia.Fig.10 Etching on zinc plate

J. Nolan 2017



Sixteen years after Giacometti's birth the artist Chaim Soutine was born and raised in a small Jewish settlement near Minsk, present day Belarus, his interest in drawing incurring much opposition with his orthodox family and the community because of Talmudic proscriptions regarding images, breaking the second commandment, "Thou shalt have no other Gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image" Exodus 20; (pp.3-6) had to be adhered to. The writer and psychoanalyst Alice Miller discusses (1969 p.47) how Soutine's work portrays strange twisted and tortured landscapes and houses looking as if they are almost quivering, 'Ceret Landscape' Fig.11. How Soutine had been influenced by his experiences as a child and had been beaten regularly because of his drawings and paintings and he never lost his quivering fear depicting it in his work.

Fig.11 'Ceret Landscape

Oil on Canvas

Chaim Soutine 1920-1921



Soutine had a complex relationship with food which stems from his Jewish faith and the rituals around it. Food had to be Kosher with the slaughtering of animals in a particular way, for example with a knife across the animals throat, as well as foods scarcity during his youth. Soutine's vivid depictions of still life dominate a lot of his work as in 'The Carcass' Fig.12 and although the illustrated works have not been portraits Soutine still allowed his inner psyche and complex emotions to be conveyed onto the canvas.

Fig.12 The Carcass

Oil on canvas

Chaim Soutine 1925



Soutine wrote;

“Once I saw the village butcher slice the neck of a bird and drain the blood out of it I wanted to cry out, but his joyful expression caught in my throat. This cry, I always feel it there. I tried to rid myself of this cry but in vain. When I painted the carcass it was still this city that I wanted to liberate. I have not succeeded”. McKendrick (1994 pp.109-110)

It could also be theorized had Soutine been writing about his own liberation from his difficult recollections of childhood.

In 'Two Children on a Tree Trunk' Fig.13 we can see Soutine is still gripped by the visceral charge of the paint and movement of the brush. He paints the movement of the wind, density of the air and opacity of light fully integrating the children into the composition, their arms and legs splayed out picking up the vertical and horizontal movements of the tree limbs and trunks.

Fig. 13 Two Children on a Tree Trunk.

Oil on canvas.

Chaim Soutine 1942-3



Soutine reinterpreted his work with drama and tensions his inner spirit and anger showing in the thick, strong, free flowing brushwork. Soutine had a unique way of conveying psyche through the manipulation of paint with religious persecution a large influence on his work. Although not all of Soutine's work had been portraits he showed his inner psyche by all manner of his practice and his biography can be read in his art. The influences of Soutine on my practice had been to reflect on my childhood with all its fears, anxieties and emotions bringing this to the work as in (Journal) Fig.36 and 37.

Persecution is also one of the themes of the contemporary artist Marlene Dumas who is widely known for her intense psychologically charged works exploring various themes such as sexuality, love, death and shame, her work often focusing on the body. Dumas never paints from life but from photographs or film. She says her power of painting is to communicate complex psychological realities with drawing being a recurring and

important autonomous element in her practice throughout her career. “Art is not a Mirror. Art is a translation of that which you do not know” Dumas (2015).

Dumas’ interest is expressed in the multi part work Rejects 1994 Fig.14 Dumas perhaps implies a parallel with the way in which society accepts some and excludes others. She often uses images that already contain a history of their own for example ‘The Widow’ Fig.15.

Fig.14 Rejects.

Ink Wash

& Water Colour on Paper.

Marlene Dumas 1994



Fig15. The Widow.

Oil on Canvas.

Marlene Dumas 2013



Fig.15 is a painting taken from a photograph of Pauline Lumumba walking bare breasted through the streets of Leopoldville (now Kinshasa), in an act of mourning as in 1961 her husband Patrice Lumumba a democratically elected Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and was assassinated. Dumas also made works representing war using images of dead terrorists, martyrs and suspects. We could ask if this links to her childhood as Dumas was born in Cape Town in 1953 and grew up on farmland, her native language being Afrikaans. This in a country torn apart by Dr Malon's National Party during 1953 when he had campaigned successfully for white supremacy and racial segregation. For 6 ½ years this had been the foundations of the Apartheid regime, entrenched by legislation such as prohibition of mixed marriages, suppression of communism and prevention of illegal squatting. The political themes represented in her work stem from this period in her childhood.

'The Women of Algiers' (2001) Fig.16 was based on a 1961 photograph of a women held by French captors during the Algerian War of Independence, 1954-1962.

Fig. 16 The Woman of Algiers.

Oil on Canvas.

Marlene Dumas 2001



Dumas the youngest of three children had been well aware of Apartheid as in an interview with Deborah Solomon for the New York Times (15.6.08 p.5) Dumas shows. "We had a lady working in the house and I would sit with her and read to her. We were very warm with one another but we could not sit at the same table. That's horrible to see, how long things took for people to say. 'it is going to change'." Although the entrenched Apartheid

regime did not change for some time within the area Dumas lived in being isolated with no museums, galleries and popular culture largely nonexistent. Not until 1976 did TV arrive and then only in Cape Town.

From the time Dumas was 8 years old she collected pictures and drew cartoons of girls she saw in the pictures “it was always the face or the figure even when I was small [...] I never did a tree” (Solomon 15.6.08.p.6). Dumas works from photographs or clips from newspapers and magazines which is the inspiration for her work putting her own interpretation on the images she has collected. We can see how Dumas’ childhood of living with Apartheid, picture collecting and drawing the images she had collected influenced her practice. Also in the cropping of photographs, a film technique influencing her work, Dumas has said it gets rid of the irrelevant and can increase the sense of absorption (Dumas 2014 p.117).

When 12 years old Dumas father died, her recollection during this period were she did not know if it was worse going to see her father in the hospital or seeing him at home in the end. (Solomon 15.6.08.p.6). We can wonder to what extent her father’s death shaped Dumas’ work as much of her work depicts dead or dying figures with her art expressing grief.

Dumas communicates to the viewer both emotionally and intellectually what she sees and what she is trying to say. Her work is never safe and at times is sharp and disturbing grabbing at the viewer with an impact to look whether they like her work or not. Dumas being influenced by her childhood experiences, her picture collecting probably fueling her fantasy life and her grief at the death of her father when she was at such a young age.

In considering Dumas’ childhood and work, to an extent it illustrates the researcher’s childhood of shame, isolation, secrets, exclusion, acceptance and rejection influencing the professional life path chosen and ultimately the work in portraiture. A fascination to reveal what is behind the expression, emotional state and inner mood, what secrets does the sitter or artist reveal real or imagined at times this consuming, transforming and energizing the work.

Another contemporary artist who communicates emotionally to the viewer is Celia Paul. Paul studied at the Slade School of Art and for over 30 years her work has included three generations, her sisters, her son Frank and her mother beside other people that are close to

her. During an interview by Jack Wullschager (2016 p.2) Paul relayed “There has to be a reason to paint someone. If you know them really well you don’t have to be so literal, you can take liberties, get a sense of their presence”.

Paul’s etchings count as glimpses, particularly the soft ground etchings with their blurred lines diffused into tone, she creates a sense of inner mood with a somber palette and understated feeling perhaps in comparison with her earlier Slade graduate Gwen John. John’s portrait Fig17 have a self scrutiny, the image and the isolation of the figure registers.

Fig. 17 Self Portrait.

Oil on Canvas.

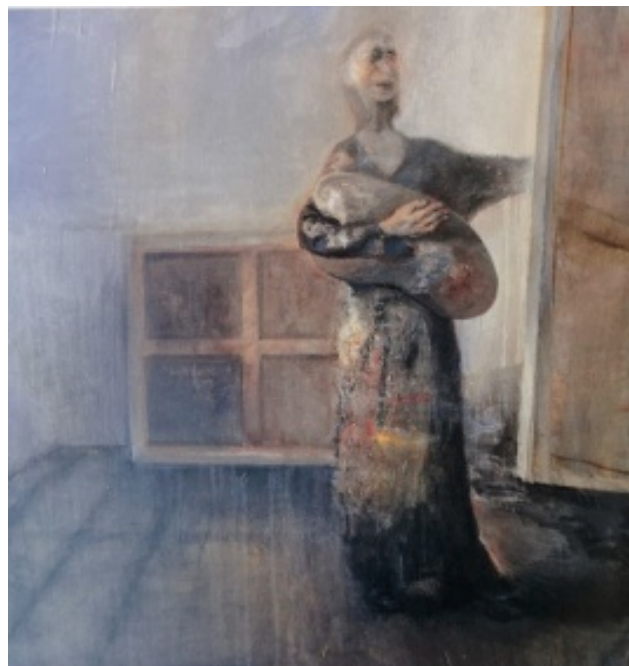
Gwen John 1902



Fig.18 Self Portrait.

Oil on Canvas.

Celia Paul 2003



Both self portraits are very different and in looking at this work by John she has portrayed herself as serene and tranquil, it is a refined way of painting rendered in closely related tones with light illuminating the face. Most of John’s portraits are of anonymous female sitters; this being a period when men largely dominated the art world although in recent years John’s reputation has eclipsed that of her brother Augustus John.

However, Paul gives her portrait Fig.18 a misty dove grey background the dazzling background colour somehow challenges us to become part of her intimacy a luminous canvas. We can recognize the shadowed eyes and mouth that can be indicative of her work taking the light and sharing it, then throwing it back to the darkness of eyes and mouth, Paul's right arm is around the palette as though cradling a child, the canvas facing away it's flat surface supported by wooden crosspieces which is now a familiar motif of her work.

William Fever the art critic wrote an introduction to Paul's work (2004 p.15) asking what effect she would like her exhibition to have? Her reply had been:

“I would like it to be like the mysterious, complex communication of a handwritten letter- (however powerful) printed by a computer [...] I would love people to feel they loved painting”.

Paul is a spiritual artist in that she is concerned with making the personal truthful her work opens up a painterly and conceptual dialogue between artist and sitter as when painting her mother Fig.19 Paul has said, “paintings of my mother are always about her, me and also about her faith”. (2004 p.15).

Fig. 19 Mother and Cross

Oil on Canvas

Celia Paul 2001



Rowan Williams, (2004 p. 99 - 102) claims few artists have consistently painted human form on such a tiny range of subjects, this continuous revisiting of a small number of

faces. But we know the artist Frank Auerbach has had the same six sitters for the past 30 years this being confirmed when I attended a lecture by Catherine Lampert on Frank Auerbach in December 2018 who is one of his sitters, we also understand Giacometti probably only had three sitters as well.

In Paul's work there is a setting out to resolve a problem, all artists do this, but Paul's skill in her portraiture is in a sense narrow and her compositions create a resonance between the face, shadows and darkness that invite the viewer to engage even if the eyes are in shadow. Her work shows a reflection of something deeper her own meaning belief and what she perceives or has perceived in the sitter. It's a mystery of human perception that opens out one to another that some people would call God.

The quiet powerful way Paul shows the inner quality of the sitter in her portraits, her work not obvious initially but quietly overtaking the viewer as you look deeply into the portrait. Paul's influences for me have been to move even more to the inner life of the sitter, not worrying anxiously about the outward appearance that would be so readily recognisable to the viewer initially.

Miller argues (PVii 1990) "The Untouched Key" when leafing through a creative person's biography of childhood events, traces are always apparent in the person's creative work usually running through it like a continuous thread. Kollwitz, Soutine and Dumas have this thread. With Giacometti and Paul opening up a conceptual dialogue between sitter and artist both working with people who are very close to them and who they know intimately, there work in a sense more narrow and intimate.

With regard to Miller's comments there is a continuous thread leading from the researcher back to her childhood memories that she could trace, memories that were poignant, sometimes fearful and other times happy. Considering happy memories this brought the researcher to a memory regarding working with a friend who had volunteered to sit for a drawing. I had known Kathy very well as we had been work colleagues and friends for a long time. The drawing had not been successful as there had been a resonance between us that interrupted the flow of creativity. In using historical models to reflect on my own practice for example, when Giacometti had been speaking to Sylvester (1981 p.10-11) regarding memory, "one always sees much more than one can cope with, so one gets lost in too many complications". In working from memory and attempting to retain what had struck forcibly, the knowing collided with what had actually been seen, Kathy's outward

appearance and the conversation interfering with the process. Although not being aware if this had ever occurred previously with other sitters who I knew very well, believing the work had been enhanced by memory as in the (Journal plate 57) of Kathy, and (Journal plate 42) of Larry who I knew had witnessed acts of violence and bloodshed.

When working from photographs the researcher has taken, she has to have had some personal communication between herself and the person who has been photographed; this would be before beginning to draw from the photograph. In understanding the creative process it usually begins with thinking about the person and how they had responded at that time, whether knowing for example the volunteers in the research, knowing their beliefs and why they chose to do voluntary work or where their life path had led them? Imagining the person in front of her, their character, ways of knowing and looking, this coupled with the researcher's mood and feelings at that precise time. Linking into this all the influences that have led the researcher to the place where she is at that precise moment when reaching for charcoal, pen or pencil, coming together into the finished drawing and subsequently the etching and finished work; with drawing, to borrow words from Giacometti, "drawing is the basis of everything", being a reoccurring and important autonomous element in the work.

Contemporary Examples of Portraiture: Interviews.

The interpretation of the interviews had come from chunks of transcribed texts from recorded interviews from the four artists: Jason Bowyer; Kathryn Rennie; Melissa Scott Miller; Dawn Cole as well as from the researcher's journal. The focus is on three main aspects:

1. Themes
2. The observations about the nature of the interaction during the interviews and the unconscious process i.e. what is not being said, how can we understand this?
3. Thinking more ethnographically about circumstances of the interview.

1. Themes

In this section I will explore how artists communicate about themselves and about their relationships with others through the form of portraiture including the human situation of the sitter and the artist. How does introspection and memory influence and reflect in their work?

We began the interviews exploring their stories, "how do people make sense of what happened and to what effect", (Bryman 2016 p.589)," discussing what they see as important and significant providing their point of orientation" (p.401).

In exploring the artists' family background I perceived in some cases these were very different from each other; the artist Jason Bowyer whose parents were professional artists and teachers and had encouraged him in his artistic pursuits, Jason explaining his parents' network of associates had helped him greatly in his career, "it does enable connections in the art world which are very helpful."

Another artist Kathryn Rennie had enjoyed drawing from a very young age living in a rural environment discovering her facility to make images beginning with the animals around her home saying, "I didn't realise I was attracted to shape and lines."

A third artist Melissa Scott Miller had been born in Central London in a very built up area and still lived in that locality having a love of Victorian buildings and damaged brickwork that had various fauna growing between the broken debris, "I love things that are growing, nature growing out of walls".

The fourth artist Dawn Cole did not discuss her childhood other than to speak about her family archives which had inspired her concepts and led her to how she works currently. "When reading Clarice's diaries she's in control of what's being told that's her that took me there and the archives when reading about her".

My own story had been living in the East End of London just after the Second World War in a caring but at times disrupted family, on reflection at a later stage in my life realising why faces had always fascinated me as what secrets lay behind the face. (Autobiography p.8) “I realised coupled with mother’s illness there had been secrecy and shame and the trauma of her institutionalisation”.

The commonality of the artists had been their family environment as one artist had eventually been influenced by his parents’ environment who were professional artists who taught and sold their work, another artist living in a rural community with initially animals and eventually people becoming the drive for her artistic ambition, with a further artist’s inspiration coming from her environment in London, another from her long deceased Aunt inspiring her work. For the researcher her biography and professional working life had influenced her practice as an artist. All had attended University at various stages in their lives and had attained a B.A. in Fine Art then moved onto various specialities such as residencies, teaching, belonging to various art organisations such as The Royal Society of Portrait Painters. They were all professional practising artists the researcher the only one currently attending university.

Four of the artists had shared attributes regarding a relationship with the sitter, with the comments being made during interviews, this included information from the researcher’s Journal throughout. The researcher’s comment (Journal p.58) regarding “the responses had been many from bereavement to actually being homeless”. Kathryn had spoken about “you can really see them and their energy”, Jason’s comment being “there’s a certain balance between structure and psyche, it’s quite staggering”. Melissa began talking about “if you really want to do a good portrait, you would have to know people”.

The artists had said in various ways personality and engagement between the artist and the sitter was paramount. The feelings and emotions being felt while the artists worked and although they had said this in different ways it had similar meanings; Melissa had relayed “a lot of stuff you do invent unwillingly and then a lot of things that come from yourself, you can’t help it’s about my own personal experience. If you get really into a painting it’s almost like meditation. I completely forget everything”. Kathryn had said “in a bubble”, “you just soak it in it’s almost like having a bank up here [points to her head]”. Jason had described it as, “elements of being in your own time and place”.

The artist Dawn Cole relayed her practice came from words she had read in her Aunt’s diaries as well as from her own thoughts, feelings and emotions. “When reading Clarice’s diaries she’s in control of what’s being told,” Dawn then spoke about “finding out and then the path where it leads me”. I interpreted this as her “elements of being in your own time and place” or “almost like meditation”, emulating the other artists’ thoughts and feelings.

When discussing feelings of anger, injustice and suffering some of the artists were quite passionate about this. Melissa showed a sensitivity and empathy when speaking about Chris Ofili’s tapestry and the weavers who made the work, recalling “it really slightly annoyed me as it seems the weavers did all the work and he got all the money”.

Melissa continued this conversation recalling how she had shown her anger when the head of her son's school disagreed with her request and showed her anger in a painting she had put on display at the school. "I couldn't bear it, so I got this really big canvas and did a painting of the school; I pretended there was graffiti about the headmaster on it".

I recalled a visit to the homeless centre and the emotions the visit evoked of suffering and injustice. This brought thoughts of "my parents they had been made homeless" which I had learned about much later in my life" (Journal p.61). Further disquiet had been shown by Kathryn about the ego of some of the commissions she had portrayed "the ego which I suppose I really find I'm fascinated by, because it's really the last thing, it rules people out as I wouldn't want a portrait of myself, umm it's always the people you don't think would be fussy about what they look like [incredulous voice]". More stories evolved during the interviews with Jason speaking about a commissioned portrait that had been returned as the commissioner did not like the work, "It wasn't him judging it, it was his mother, she probably viewed, umm as a good looking twenty year old and his like sixty or seventy". Although Jason in regaling the story laughed ruefully, I observed he seemed irritated the work had not been well received.

Dawn spoke strongly about the injuries inflicted on men during the First World War illustrating her emotions with a statement about men having eyes removed and the impact these words had on her. "When I do text it will be a piece of text I find moving and emotional. Men had eyes removed, a statement of the First World War, an evocative statement yes it would have an impact on me".

2. Observations about the nature of the interaction during the interviews and the unconscious process i.e. what is not being said, how can we understand this?

During the interview Kathryn began to demonstrate how she worked from various photographs for a particular commission. It seemed to me as if she was managing a jigsaw puzzle desperately trying to attempt some semblance of the person and their energy through the photographs; “working like that you know, head from there, body from there it’s kinda almost working and putting it altogether”. Her explanation of working in this way had she said not been her ideal way of working. I felt empathy for her during this period of the interview and of her struggle to make the work ‘live’. However she seemed moderately pleased with the work and said the commissioned work had been well received by the family and they were collecting the portrait the following day. Through our conversations it seemed the artist would have liked to create more work of her own choosing and attempting to discover her own self through her work “I’m made up of thoughts, feelings, emotions and in going to pick out a few I see, and yes it’s going to be you but someone else. Taking my work, taking it beyond the physical form, umm this body is just a gateway to something that is quite major.”

The conversation then moved onto a recent commission by the Thalidomide Trust for fourteen portraits regarding survivors fifty years on. I perceived during our conversation that Kathryn had not discerned she had become informed and infinitely more aware regarding the human situation of disabled people with her comments being: “wow emotionally it was kinda sobering. I wanted them to come forward in the canvas as a character rather than just, umm [pauses] a person that doesn’t have all their arms and legs”. The interview had been very informal with the artist’s dog who accompanied her in the studio during the session jumping onto my lap amid much laughter from both of us.

This episode relaxed the atmosphere even more, although the dog had been a distraction for me during the session as he wanted to be petted but I had been disinclined to mention this as Kathryn was obviously very fond of her dog and pleased he liked me. I recalled from a feminist position how a participatory model of research that challenges power relationships between the researcher and the researched, (Blackman Lecture, Feminist Research) and because of this declined to mention the dog’s interference during the interview.

On meeting the artist Melissa who had been very relaxed during our interview she asked if I would mind her eating lunch during this period. I agreed thinking about the balance of power again between interviewer and interviewee which had shifted slightly again. While the interview was taking place her large Labrador dog had lain at my feet eventually falling asleep snoring softly in the small sitting room cum studio which had easels, paintings, tubes of paints and the ephemera of her work scattered around. Melissa spoke about attending the Slade School of Art in London and how she had completed her degree but after a period of time she felt as if she had been forgotten as an artist as her peer group were not around anymore, explaining all she could do was to be an artist saying: “can’t

really do anything else but be an artist and I had to support my children and so had to really work hard [said with a lot of emotion]”. I thought this showed her strength of will and determination in working through this difficult period with her eventually becoming a successful and well known artist.

Regarding working from photographs for commissioned portraits Melissa had said she recently turned one down as she had become bored working from photographs. This had been quite a step for her as money from a commission had always been welcome relaying, “sometimes I have done them something from photographs umm, if I have a photograph I’m bored and it comes across when you look at it. Yesterday I finally turned down a commission for a painting from a photograph because it makes me feel uncomfortable, [Melissa shifting as if uncomfortable in her skin].” In looking at Melissa’s attitude to this it seemed she partially regretted turning down the commission but at the same time believed in her integrity by refusing the commission.

Injustice had been expressed by Melissa as she had a moral code both for people she knew and did not know with empathy and sensitivity for the sitters she said; “people should not be suffering at all. I cannot detach I’m thinking it doesn’t seem to help as I still see myself worrying if their uncomfortable. Even if you’re paying somebody if you really had a heart you wouldn’t want them to be that uncomfortable, [said with real feeling]”.

A discussion took place with Melissa around inventing things, “a lot of stuff you do invent unwillingly and then on a lot of things that come from yourself, you can’t help it. I get involved in it until I completely forget everything, feels kinda selfish going off on this kinda revelry”. This had been an unconscious process during her practice and she almost apologised for these delightful episodic periods during her practice, feeling guilty and selfish enjoying herself. This seemed to me a stereo type of women’s’ experiences about not being validated or valued. (Blackman Lecture on Feminist Research).

Jason had been the only male artist interviewed but he had not been singled out deliberately as three other male artists had been approached who wished to help with the research. Unfortunately, for various reasons, they had eventually been unavailable. The researcher could have made a decision to have all female interviewees but wished to have a male perspective on the interviews and the research.

Jason had just completed an exhibition in his studio inviting me for coffee at his favourite cafe locally. We returned to the studio for the interview and he became very animated at one point speaking about his mother teaching him to draw a potato when he was very young, laughing as he was speaking. The interview continued with his ideas regarding composition and a cerebral charge getting his concepts to paint from his sketch books. I perceived he was almost driven to create when he explained his processes and concepts; “I find a composition that I feel I can work with which can give an emotional sort of cerebral charge and I think I’ve got to paint this [spoken passionately]”. It had been an illuminating discussion and although he believed he was not “looking for something flash, not exposing capitalism in its grandest form I’m interested in ordinary things, umm making people look

at them in an ordinary way because you're making them into a luxury item". I thought the very notion of "ordinary things," "poor subject matter" and making them into "luxury items" i.e. paintings would be making one think about our consumer society and capitalism.

A successful artist, lecturer and teacher Jason had said very strongly he would not currently undertake commissioned portraits emphasising this with "the biggest change would be a commission because it becomes a different power play. They often want to leave their mark on it. People just want a picture like a photograph or do they want something about their soul, you know about their person". In looking at Jason's artistic success the thought occurred to me this had allowed him to choose what he wanted to paint and allowed a considered choice on what he wished to do with regards to practice enabling him not to disregard any of his principals regarding portrait commissions.

Dawn had her studio in the garden and had been a visiting lecturer at the university the researcher attended and they knew each other. She spoke about her Aunt's diaries and how she worked from them and from the First World War archives. Coming from the conversation it became noticeable regarding her affection, fear and anxiety for her long dead relative, "yes I've a lot of the words from the diaries they come directly from that so yes, situations that she is writing about people I will never know. There is one person who you can identify other that you have no idea where the hospital was, you can research but you don't know [points to Clarice's photograph, looks sad]."

Dawn's emotions had been wrapped around the diaries and the archives with an interpretation and her own deliberate viewpoint. My question had been about "so it's about the unseen" referring to a viewer looking at her work. Dawn's reply had been, "a propaganda viewpoint or to make them [the viewer] see it in your way which is happening quite a lot currently [said strongly]." These comments I interpreted as a political comment regarding the current political situation.

The lace pieces in Dawn's work were actual texts, she said, although she did not let the viewer know this but wishes them to believe whatever they actually see, lace or words. My view of this had been she wanted the viewer not to take things at face value as further scrutiny and an in depth thoughtful view should be made. Again this could allude to the current political scene or perhaps it could be the artist's view of life and her need to continue to investigate archives and the diaries which feeds her desire to work.

This reminded me of how in my own practice I was drawing a friend and although the interaction was full of empathy and friendship, the drawing did not work, something was missing it was not a 'lived' piece of work. I continued drawing after she had left and let my mind meander, a successful lively drawing appeared which I had been pleasantly pleased about; "it was pedestrian and although the likeness had been apparent in the drawings it did not show her strength of character or her gentle helpful giving nature. I decided to draw Kathy after she had left as I remembered her, holding out a dish full of marigolds and candles during a special day we had together some time ago" (Journal p.82).

Also when I had been drawing Giselle her thick lustrous hair became the main focus of the drawing and not her expressive sensitive face. I decided to crop the drawing getting rid of what I perceived as not essential. My thoughts of what had occurred to the drawing and what I am saying to the viewer is: “focus on her face the rest is irrelevant [...] the drawing although it did not say what I wanted, [...] began cropping the image. After a few tries I obtained the image I wanted [...] focussing on the soft gentle vulnerable look, getting rid of the irrelevant”. (Journal p.100)

3. Thinking more ethnographically about circumstances of the interview.

The general impression from all four interviews had been the artists were very welcoming and free with their comments, asking questions about the research and my work. They made me feel comfortable either in their studio or their home. In one setting during the interview Kathryn's receptionist interrupted us delivering a message. I stopped the tape and waited to be told to continue. Apologies were given and we continued with a re-cap of our discussion, I had been very aware of letting Kathryn take the lead in continuing the interview. The interruption did not spoil the interview as it had given time to focus on what had already been said for both of us and to think how we would continue. An emotional connection had been present during the interview especially when Kathryn began speaking about her feelings and emotions when working.

Jason had been keen to show me his work hanging on the Steam & Locomotive Museum and we had wandered around the museum with him talking about his work. During this period I had been anxious to return to Jason's studio in the museum grounds to record the interview as his comments during our walk on his practice had been very interesting. However he was not in any hurry and so I followed his lead until we eventually returned to the studio. Jason offered me a 'comfortable chair' and we began, he looked relaxed and got into his story immediately the conversation flowing with questions being asked if he was unsure of anything.

Melissa had been interviewed while eating her lunch and although initially tense, visibly relaxed when I explained the interview process again and what would happen to the tape and transcriptions. Photographs taken of her with two of her paintings were agreed although she had been reluctant to have her sitting room/studio photographed as they were full of paraphernalia. She explained a journalist who had visited her recently had only been interested in the "detritus" in her room. I took the photographs and showed them to her asking if she was happy with them which she was. She asked questions about my practice and asked if she could see my work via email, which I readily agreed to.

Dawn had been the artist I knew and who was a visiting lecturer at the university. After taking me through her home to the kitchen she introduced me to her carpenter who was working in her kitchen and went to great lengths to explain how the cupboards would look in the kitchen when the carpenter's work had been completed. I enjoyed the encounter as it felt relaxed and friendly, we then proceed with full coffee mugs in our hands to her garden studio. This was a roomy studio with all the equipment of a printmaker and she seemed pleased about my interest in the equipment and her work. During the interview I believed at sometime she felt it difficult to explain her feelings and emotions about her practice and began repeating what she had already said. This did not deter from the interview and clarified for her what she was trying to say.

Analysis of the Interviews

In considering the four artists' interviewed and the analysis of the transcribed interviews they were shown to communicate about themselves and about their relationship with the sitter, the work transformed through the artists' recollections and emotional states both past and present. This supported and clarified my concept regarding the artists' practice which included my own, that having a dialogue with the sitter enhanced the work by offering insights into the situation of the sitter. Also artists do employ a form of communication about themselves and about their relationships when working. The artists expressed thoughts, feelings, tensions and injustice in their work which they spoke about and also conveyed this via pencil, charcoal, brush and paint. They all agreed a relationship with a sitter is paramount to capture their "essence", "energy" "emotional" as well as their "physical states". When working the artists' emotional feelings varied to being "lost" or like "meditation" to being "in a bubble" looking outwards and inwards to the sitters and to their own psyche sometimes knowing and at times unknowing.

Differences were identified with some artists' practices when working from either a sitter or photographs for a commission. Commissions were not always welcome and had been refused by two artists' while a third artist did work in this way and another worked from archived material and commissions. Other differences had been one artist showing a deep sympathy for the sitter, worrying if they were uncomfortable as well as feeling guilty when enjoying herself working.

I could not ascertain whether any of the artists interviewed except myself had completed a portrait from memory or had thought of doing so. The question of what artists' thought of when working had clearly not been answered fully as it varied so much, at times it was a conscious process and at other times unconscious, the work being transformed by the artists' exposure to their memories and emotional state. Replies were given but ultimately it consisted of a myriad of memories, feelings, and influences which could not be defined other than a "lot of it comes unwillingly and then from yourself".

Researcher

In looking at who and what am I through the form of portraiture on reflection it has been triggered by the deep emotional experiences of my childhood which has coloured my life path and practice. At times this has been a conscious awareness driven by memories, influences and tensions and a belief in what I perceived and transferred into the work. This has been conveyed and shared with viewers as in my artistic practice for example, myself as a child and memories of mother Fig. 36 & 41.

On reflection regarding memories, feelings and influences when I began drawing Kevin I had thoughts of myself as a teenager, brave, confident but fearful too. This conveyed in the drawing, Kevin's wary look, my thoughts and the look in Kevin's eyes all transferred through the drawing and print process on to paper Fig.39 & 40. Once again when drawing Larry seeing his strength of purpose and character shown in his strong features I began to look inwards to my own feelings, then working with those feelings of injustice, justice and the world around us as it is today all influencing the drawing and what I was portraying on the paper Fig.42 & 43. In portraying Glynis I recalled she had come through a difficult time in her life and her sadness was almost palpable, her sensitivity and compassion had shown itself in her face and it moved me. When drawing Glynis her story came to me again resurrecting my own memories of loss and sadness which again were conveyed with the work Fig. 45 & 46.

The communication both verbal and observed with a sitter even if the meeting and conversation had been for a short while and only a photograph taken to work from has informed my practice, as to portray someone an artist requires life experience and a connection with the sitter to uncover the animation, essence and psyche of the person. Knowing the sitter well as opposed to only having a brief connection with them did not seem to influence the work, which has surprised me as I discovered when working with the charity volunteers. As long as one had a sense of the person and a connection to them during a sitting or when taking a photograph, the initial drawing and subsequent portrait would obtain whatever I had been trying to say whether I knew them well or only for a short period. This had been a revelation to me and will obviously influence my practice. Another revelation had been about commissioned portraits, how the ego of the sitter can influence and at times not allow the artist's truth of what they see and feel come through the portrait. This brought a response in relation to my practice as all the portraits I have completed had not been commissioned but have been purchased after the portrait had been completed. With hindsight and bearing in mind the artists' interviewed and their comments regarding commissioned portraits, that they can be a very complex affair, I am now aware of the pitfalls and this has been a very helpful learning process.

Summary of Historical Examples of Artists in the Literature Review.

In briefly summarising the historical examples of the artists contained in the literature review, from the research Kathe Kollwitz' work had been greatly influenced by her personal life and by events and emotions she had experienced directly. This included the pity and horror of war addressing the social ills of the country with the most powerful means available to her, drawing, etching and sculpture, her art.

Alberto Giacometti's influences also came at a time during and after the horrors of war and racial ideology of Nazism. His philosophies of alienation and loneliness reducing human bodies to its barest state portrayed in his drawings and sculptures.

Chaim Soutine's paintings and the secondary literature about them inform us Soutine depicted his complex emotions through his art. These emotions came from his childhood and the punishment meted out by his orthodox Jewish family and the community. This had been for not abiding by the second commandment Exodus 20; (p. 3-6). Other influences on Soutine had been his relationship with food and the rituals around food with religious persecution also having a strong powerful affect upon his work.

In looking at Marlene Dumas' work her art is intense and psychologically charged exploring themes such as sexuality, love, death and shame. She uses images that already contain a history of their own, the work influenced by her childhood in an Apartheid regime, by the death of her father when she was at a young age and also injustices in the world around her.

Celia Paul's work is very spiritual and makes the personal truthful. It is a mysterious complex communication as her work is a painterly dialogue between her, the sitter and her own meaning and belief and what she has perceived in the sitter. Paul works mainly with sitters she knows intimately as she has said she doesn't have to be so "literal with them" and can "get a sense of their presence".

The above artists had all been influenced in some way by their life experiences such as childhood, their faith, injustice, grief, and by their own thoughts and feelings flowing through them transforming and influencing the work, as well as being influenced by their insights, communication and feelings towards the sitters and also by the inner life of the sitters.

Conclusions

When I began this research process my hypothesis had been whether artists having a dialogue with the sitter enhance the work by offering insights into the situation of the sitter, also their communication about themselves and about their relationship with the sitter, the work perhaps being transformed through the artists' recollection and emotional states both past and present of themselves. I chose three methodologies: interviewing four artists regarding their practices and influences, an autobiography and monthly journal of my practice and journey with historical examples of portraiture which could reveal an understanding of artists' conscious and unconscious drives and impulses.

Work from this rich body of research with the above themes emerging had informed and enabled substantial insight (Nelson 2013 p.43), "making the tacit more explicit" regarding artists' practices. From this I have and will go forward in my own practice with greater willingness to explore my creativity. The implications of the research will give greater insight and understanding of how artists communicate about themselves and about other people. How we look at artists' working practices which although the samples in the research were small they have a range of common and some different ways of working.

In summarising the intimate feelings and thoughts of my childhood and family situation, I do hesitate to call my childhood 'traumatic' as at that time the responsibility of my mother was my 'normality'. Although on reflection I would not expect any child now to support a parent without support from friends, authorities or charitable organisations but we know from the media this is happening in various countries throughout the world.

The portrait of me as a child Fig.36 and of my mother Fig. 41 at times had been painful to work with bringing feelings of love, loss and abandonment. These feelings obviously lying dormant but now recognised for what they are, my history and part of who and what I am. The sitters' brief conversations connected with my life experiences and enabled empathy and awareness to their situation connecting myself and the sitters during this brief period. This connection enabled the portraits to be more of a truth coming from the sitters and from myself relaying this truth onto the work and subsequently onto the finished portrait. It would now be for the viewer to observe and discover their own truth when viewing the portrait.

I am not saying this is the whole truth, regarding how artists practice, but a partial truth bearing in mind we as people shape the images we make and our interpretations are shaped by our autobiographies and of being aware of what we do not know. This extra knowledge and greater understanding could make a contribution to influence and transform other artists work, the importance of transmission of introspection with memories both past and present, the artists' communicating about themselves and of their relationship with others. The artists transferring and transforming their memories, thoughts and feelings, sharing these sensations through their art.

Appendices.

Journal

October 2016. University print room.

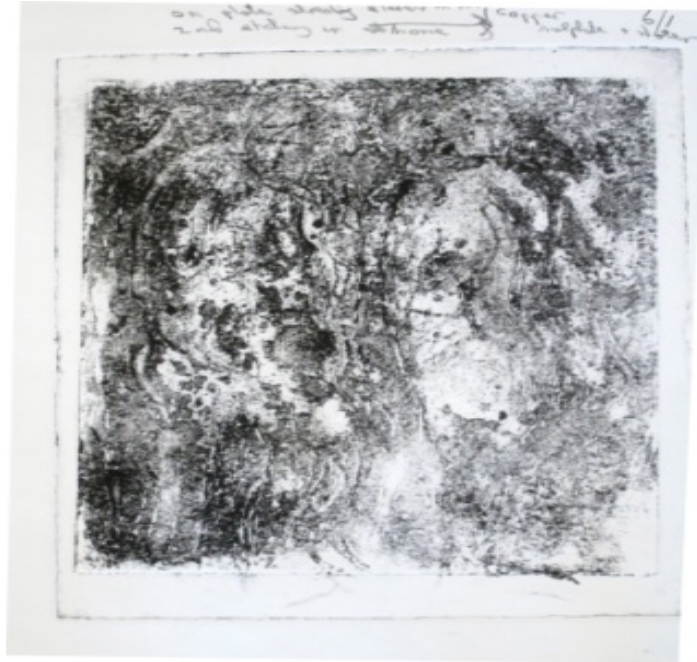
During this period I completed work on zinc etching plates. There are various ways of etching a plate and different ways of etching and printing dictate the way you should use it. This has always been the hook with which printing has captured me but I particularly like soft ground etchings with their blurred tones and lines. Printmaking is not just to make reproductions it has its own inherent qualities, rules, disadvantages and problems as well as traditions. No prints are ever identical as there are always differences due to the processes and execution which again is the wonder of printmaking.

Two figures etched on a plate with soft ground Fig.20 printed in black ink. The figures etched are simply facing each other: line, shape and relationship had been key elements, as well as how we confront a dialogue between ourselves, looking deeply why we behave in a particular way. Further work on the plate occurred as I had been trying to obtain a blurred effect on the plate as if the images were wading through thoughts trying to discover who am I? Fig.21 printed in black ink had not been successful as the images were too blurred being left in the acid too long.

Fig. 20



Fig.21



Home studio

At my home studio I used copper sulphate 6/1 with water on an etching plate 22, the marks being abstracted elongated figures, the feeling of one being stretched as at that precise time that is exactly how I felt. Further work is required for more definition with much stronger mix of copper sulphate. Plate printed in black ink.

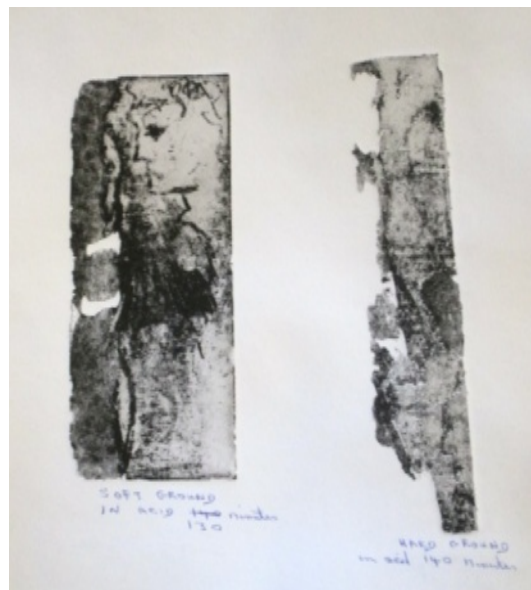
Fig.22



University print room

I had the concept of degrading the plate to give it more depth and character sketching a small portrait and mark making around the sketch. Fig. 23. A further plate had been left with just a few marks applied in order to test out how long before there would be hardly any zinc left on the edges of the plate. Fig. 24 printed in black ink.

Fig. 23 & 24



November

Plate 25 had been etched from a drawing with the idea of showing different facets of a person's character, the highs and lows and tensions in-between: the idea of having three zinc plates making up the whole person that had been drawn and then etched. I allowed the acid to bite into both sides of each plate giving an interesting raw look to the print Fig. 25.

Fig.25



During this period in the print studio I decided using the printmaking medium of lino for its ease of use as one can make quick incisive marks which respond to your hand, arm and brain readily. Some difficulties regarding the use of this material may occur as it is made from natural material and overtime can become brittle and hard. It can also be difficult to make large works as it is cumbersome and can bend and break with the lino degrading after a certain amount of time during the print process..

I chose a drawing of a black migrant dancer drawn and photographed when he was performing in the street. My conversation with the dancer had been interesting as he spoke about dance and the sadness of leaving his country, but no matter how I endeavored to abstract the work I felt this did not portray his movements, strength, power or the sadness at leaving his country. The conversation reminded me of the artist Jim Dine whose itinerant background gave him the impulse to explore the unknowable landscape in his art. "I have to leave somewhere before I can paint it" (Gompertz 2015 p.46). Dine's message had been about memories and not sentimental recollections. The landscapes he was exploring were metaphysical the ethereal space that separates the real and remembered. I had thoughts that the migrant dancer in leaving his country had been able to express his feelings more in dance about his memories and in doing so left such an impression on me Fig.26 and 27.

Fig. 26



Fig 27



In the print studio I began using a silkscreen printing process using the same drawing of the migrant dancer, which for my purpose gave more freedom of expression in the work.

Fig.28.



Fig. 29



On reflection this had been an interesting print as it shows strength and vitality as well as a level of sadness reflected in using a cool distancing blue colour. The portrait is facing side on with part of the arm extended as if he is leaving or moving around, mouth open taking in gulps of breaths as he dances showing exertion Fig. 28. The other example Fig. 29 in orange gave a feeling of heat and hot desert looking back to the dancer's country of origin with a wistful almost ethereal feel to the work, the medium influencing the work and becoming part of the message. The work with the migrant dancer which had been a chance meeting had been on reflection very productive reminiscent of memories of leaving a place and of people, a great sadness at that leaving.

December

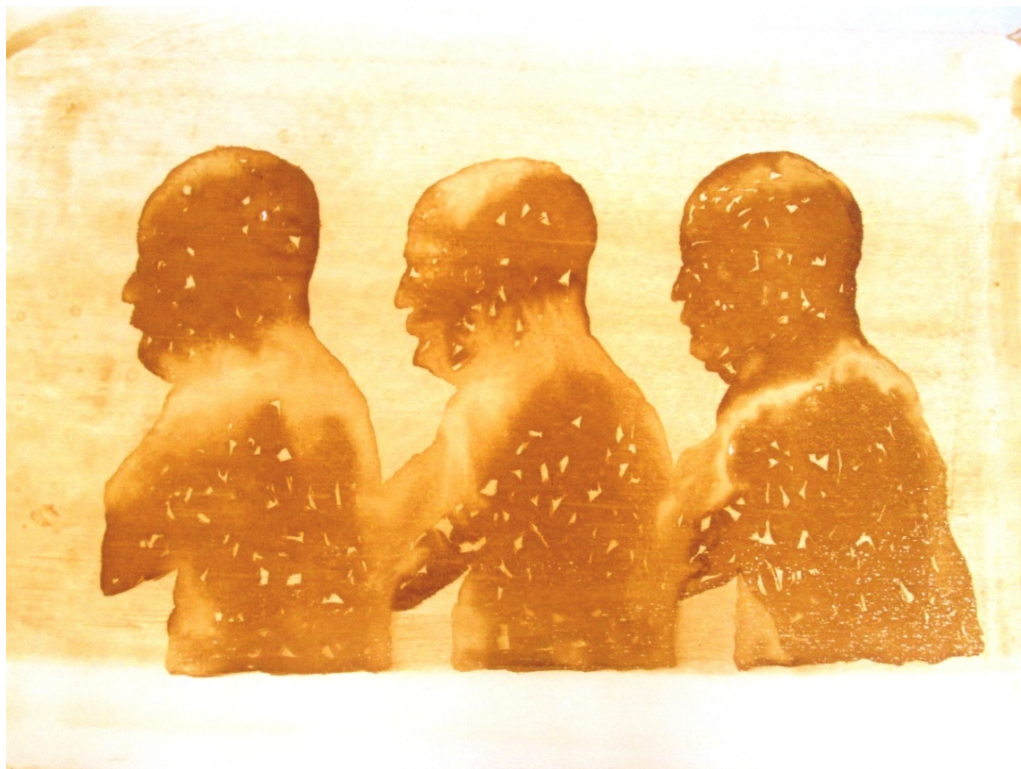
In order to further explore my own practice with particular reference to memory and introspection I contacted the director of a homeless organization. The purpose of this would be encounters with a group of people who were not known to me previously. How would I be influenced by the group who had a common interest? I enquired if I could have discussions with the volunteers and staff regarding the research.

While I waited for a response from the homeless centre director I continued to work with the migrant dancer's sketch using the same silkscreen technique as previously but now making three portraits as one print Fig.30 and 31. The reasoning behind this had been to encapsulate movement and more of a dialogue between the three portraits, three portraits all the same but different, printed twice one in blue the other orange.

Fig.30



Fig.31



January 2017

After further emails the homeless centre have responded regarding 12 volunteers and staff who have offered to take part in the research and to have discussions regarding their work while I sketch and photograph them. Two preliminary dates have been given and I have agreed to take some of my work to the meeting for the volunteers and staff to view.

Regarding interviewing artists I knew, Dawn Cole was a conceptual artist printmaker who was a visiting lecturer at the University I attended. After a telephone call to Dawn she said she would be happy to support the research and we duly organized a time and place for the interview. Dawn's work is focused on her family archives from WW1 and a VAD Nurse Clarice Spratling who had been Dawn's great aunt. Dawn uses her great aunt's diaries as a starting point in her work and agreed to an interview on the 13th February at her studio in Thanet and for the interview to be recorded.

During this month in the studio I decided to work on a carborundum plate using images of a person's face I had seen whilst out walking. I sketched directly onto the plate from memory with the first proof too pale, the 2nd proof using chine colle becoming more interesting in a way that I remembered, the face rough, ruddy, the eyes rheumy but sad and all seeing: the interpretation of my brief recollection of the man transforming into something tangible Fig 32 and 33.

Fig.32



Fig.33



February

I had found an old photograph taken when I had been approximately 4 years of age. I remembered wistful thoughts and feelings of being a lonely child, lost and sad, but determined that I would see mother again soon. The concept had been a portrait of me as a young child emulating the emotions I had remembered and felt, also the aging process which occurs naturally through skin and bone within the plate itself, the plate being aged in the print process. This would give texture, tone and marks bitten through the plate.

There were two etchings made, Fig. 34 and 35 but they had been too degraded through the print process although marks had bitten through and the foul marks gave an interesting age to the plate. Another plate was etched which proved more successful, emotion showing in the work I had remembered at that young age. I printed the plate in black ink as well as rolling over the plate in coloured ink, Fig.36 and 37.

Fig. 34



Fig. 35



Fig.36.



Fig.37



Monday arrived and the interview with Dawn Cole artist printmaker in the afternoon. Dawn exhibits widely and has participated in exhibitions in Portugal, USA, Japan, France and throughout the UK. Her work is held in the permanent print collection at the V&A and in private collections in the UK, USA and China. Although Dawn is not a portrait artist/printmaker I wanted to include her in the research as her research had been initially on one person Clarice Spratling. Clarice had been dead for many decades but the legacy she left had inspired and walked side by side with Dawn throughout her work

Dawn had been awarded the V&A prize, and in 2013 a finalist for the Arts Foundation Fellowship Award: Printmaking. Dawn is a visiting lecturer at Canterbury Christ Church University and has lectured throughout the UK, she is also Artist in Residence at Canterbury Cathedral and works with 4 other artists on 'From Wasteland to Wasteland', a prolonged project in response to the Lochnagar Crater in La Boisselle. Dawn founded 'Pushing Print' an art based organisation in Margate in 2009. I arrived at Dawn's home while she was having work completed in her kitchen by the carpenter. Dawn made me very welcome with coffee offered she was relaxed and spoke readily about the kitchen renovations and looking forward to the interview in her garden studio.

We entered the studio which was large with all the equipment of a printmaker in and around the space. Dawn had much of her work on display and as she put on the heating we sat down for the interview with our coffee. I explain how the interview would evolve, that it would be a very relaxed interview, also for Dawn to ask me if she was unsure of anything. Photograph of Dawn in her studio.Fig.38.



The meeting with the volunteers and managers at the homeless charity had taken place with two meetings being held. The atmosphere during introductions had been initially quiet with the group sitting around a large table glancing at each other. Introductions were made and explanations as to my background and how the research came into being with some of my printed work, an etched zinc plate and lino for the group to examine. Explanations regarding print working practices and the printing processes were discussed with many questions from the group. After coffee and sandwiches conversation began to flow again with one person in the group speaking about the history of the charity and how it functions. I asked the group why they had joined the charity; the responses had been many and varied from bereavement to actually being homeless. One volunteer said “I saw Christian faith in action and that is why I joined the charity”.

Another person quoted partially from Mahatma Gandhi. “Be the change that you wish to see in the world” (www.goodreads.com/quotes/24499). This quote from Gandhi had influenced his decision to join the charity as he said to the group “why was I not doing something to help the homeless?” There had not been enough time to sketch the entire group so photographs were taken whilst they were speaking about their experiences and I quickly made notes making sure to identify each person as that would help the initial drawing on how I would portray them.

March

During this month I had photographed and drawn student Kevin who I knew. Kevin had reminded me of myself as a young person lacking confidence but with bravado and the hopes and fears one has when young. My concept had been to capture this bravado and wariness in the print, part Kevin and part of my recollected hidden self when young. There had been water marks on the plate initially before I began etching but I thought to leave them on the plate instead of rubbing them out to see what would occur. The result had been unexpected and pleasing as leaving the water marks on the plate gave the print an added dimension. Fig.39 is printed in black ink with another print made with black ink but overlaid with a mixture of colored ink, Fig.40.

Fig.39



Fig.40



During this period I began to transcribe the interview with artist Dawn Cole remembering our discussions and how she takes her starting point from archives since 2007, focusing on the archive of WW1 VAD nurse Clarice Spratling. This small family archive contains Clarice's diary and photographs both relating to her time serving in France. Dawn uses pattern and text with her multilayered often complex works developed from this period of research, experimentation and influence. This had been a revelation to me as I had no idea of her processes and concept.

April

This month after reviewing the print of myself as a young child, I recollected this had been when I lived with an Aunt and her two children, with mother visiting when she could. My parents had been made homeless and lived in a bedsit in another town. In trying to articulate the meaning of my experience then I had a view of mother's face in my mind's eye and began to sketch her face as I remembered, mother sitting in an armchair with her hand up to her face listening to the radio. It is a wistful sketch with fond memories of tea, biscuits and of course the radio Fig.41.

Fig.41



A drawing of Larry followed who had strong features my thoughts being to emphasis these features and I drew from a kneeling position. This gave the portrait drama, the expression far seeing, a remembering but with a strong nose and mouth, the mouth turned down which had been emphasised by the way the initial drawing had been taken. Fig. 42 & 43 in black ink with Fig.43 being rolled over in black ink and then partially in red, why the red I thought because it can be the colour of bloodshed or violence an emotionally strong colour. The colour articulating for me the strong sense of justice which as Larry was an old friend and ex police officer I knew he had, the sitter in this instance influencing my practice and my own strong feelings of justice and the injustice in the world.

Fig.42



Fig.43



May 17 2017

The solar etching Fig.44 depicted Richard who had spent most of his life working with charities. He spoke freely of his experience working with the charity and through his conversation I felt a sense of piety and a lived experience coming from him. Richard spoke of working with the homeless and said “we are most useful to people through our own woundedness”. I connected with his words which influenced the interpretation of the image I finally worked through as I wished to depict just his face and hands as they were most expressive. He had a strong belief and reverence with a generosity of spirit which seemed boundless that came through to me, the hands looking as if an offering were being made, the face benign Fig.44.

Fig 44



Glynis another of the charity volunteers had presented at the meeting as a sad, gentle woman who had her own burden and history to carry. I felt a desperate need to try and capture this face. She is portrayed in the solar etching print Fig.45 and then with her face half embossed, hardly there Fig.46. Glynis had related to the Charity group during our conversation she had come from a difficult place prior to her working with the Charity. Now things had changed dramatically for the better which had been partially through her work with the homeless. Helping other people in far more difficult circumstances than herself had enabled her to re-evaluate her life and she now feels a whole person again. I portrayed Glynis coming out of her difficult circumstances Fig.46 a whole person and Fig.45 immersed in her difficulties, half there. Both prints printed in black ink.

Fig.45



Fig.46



June 2017

Prior to the university print room closing for the summer I drew Sonia a student in the last term of her BA. Sonia had always been full of fun and joy, her clothes always part of her colorful personality, although she was a deep and meditative person too. We had had interesting conversations regarding life and also a world view of how helpless one feels regarding people fleeing from persecution and what it means to us. A solar plate was made when the weather had been conducive and not too cloudy. This plate did not look useful as it had been underexposed, showing large blank spaces on the plate and other parts not visible at all. The plate would be unprintable.

June Home studio

I finally managed to make a second plate and printed it on a small press borrowed from the University although it was not successful, Fig 47. The press in the university print room is much larger with a heavier press and gives a better image. I decided to make amendments to the drawing and made some parts darker namely the mouth and shading the cheeks as these had been indistinct on the first plate. A second plate had been made and decisions made to print the plate on my return to the university print room when it re opened. This plate Fig.48 has open bite marks in the background following through onto the face, the portrait showed a meditative view of the world and as I understood it was how Sonia viewed the world, all encompassing and at times frightening the portrait's eyes looking into the middle distance. The third plate Fig.49 has been inked in black and rolled over with a mix of colors to interpret Sonia's colorful personality and clothes.

Plates printed during November 17. In University print room.

Fig. 47



Fig.48



Fig.49



July 2017 Home studio

Working in the home studio I flicked through the photographs and drawings of the managers and volunteers working with the charity. A drawing and later a solar plate of John was completed. John as I saw him is looking sad with a faraway look in his eyes and I recalled our conversation regarding how he managed the homeless centre with little facilities and funding. Another solar plate of Richard was made during this period although I could not print them as I did not have the facilities. This had been frustrating as the first print usually requires some modification for example: less ink or paper to be changed from the basic bread and butter paper or another colour to be rolled over the plate. It also allows thinking time regarding the interpretation and examination of one's own feelings regarding the print. The two plates had to wait to be printed and I had to curb my frustration at not being able to begin the process as well as time elapsing before I could modify or add to the plate.

John printed during October 2017 printed in the University print room.

Fig.50 had been wiped in black ink and then printed again in black but rolled over in coloured ink printed on Indian Rag Water Colour paper. Fig 51

Fig50



Fig.51



Jana is a manager at the charity and during our meeting she had been speaking about her family in Chenier, explaining she has no religion as she was brought up in a country where there is no religion. Jana said “you see life through giving to others.” I wondered how I would enable her thoughts to pervade the drawing, bearing in mind what she had said, and reflecting on what had been said made me think of my own beliefs.

I had worked in a voluntary capacity previously receiving great satisfaction in helping others but sometimes the pervading sadness for the less fortunate could be unsettling at times to live with. Did I believe in the ultimate goodness of others, yes I did, we are not born bad or difficult although one’s life circumstances can alter a person to be almost emotionally and psychologically unrecognisable as a caring human being?

I decided a solar etching Fig.52 printed in black ink of Jana looking contemplative although I considered using chine colle in order to give the print more depth and strength as I had seen that in her demeanour during our conversation. I used a water colour paint mix and applied this onto tissue paper, placing the torn strips on the plate which had been inked up with black ink. The result was as I required, giving depth and strength to the work Fig.53.

Fig.52



Fig.53



July 2017 home studio

Gerry had been another volunteer who I drew quickly at our group meeting during my visit. I drew him in slightly fractured way thinking about his vocation as a Franciscan monk and the stories he had related to the group during our meeting. Why did I draw Gerry in this way, possibly because of his fractured life almost living 3 lives in one: as a Franciscan monk another as a Master of Theology and teaching and then leaving the priesthood and marrying a Roman Catholic, a truly remarkable person and still giving to the community.

I made a decision to etch the drawing of Gerry in soft ground on my return to the university print room as this would give more substance to the sketchy drawing and I could also smudge the black ink to give a depth to the print. Fig.54.

Fig.54 printed in January 18 university print room.



2017 July Interview with artist Melissa Scott Miller.

Melissa studied at the Slade School of Fine art and over the past 25 years her work has been shown in many group exhibitions, including Mark Jason Gallery, New English Art Club, Hunting/Observer Art Prizes, The Mall Gallerie,; A T Kearney, B P Portrait Award, The London Group, and on 17 occasions at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibitions. Melissa was elected a member of The Royal Society of Portrait Painters in 1999 and has had several solo exhibitions in New York. She has won a number of awards including the Lynn Painter-Stainers Prize in 2008, The South Bank Picture Show, The Lucy Morrison Award, Royal Overseas League and the Elizabeth Greenshield Foundation Scholarship. She also teaches at Heatherley's School of Fine Art, London.

I arrived at Melissa's home which was a Victorian house in Islington. Melissa welcomed me and I explained the interview process. The interview took approximately one hour with Melissa showing her work and expressing an interest in the research and my own art practice. Photograph of Melissa Fig.55 with the painting of her son. Fig.56 a painting by Melissa.

Fig.55



Fig.56



2017 August home studio and garden.

Kathy a friend of long standing agreed to sit for me and I struggled to interpret what was before me. The lines on the paper were clear and seemed correct but there was no feeling, tension or softness about it. We were in the garden, Kathy sitting on a chair but as hard as I tried the drawing did not work. It was pedestrian and although the likeness had been apparent in the drawings it did not show her strength of character or her gentle helpful giving nature. I decided to draw Kathy after she had left as I remembered her, holding out a dish full of marigolds and candles during a special day we had together some time ago. It had been an interesting exercise as I had put more into the drawing than I had seen in her sitting before me, my own internal view of her coming through the drawing. This linked back to artists who work from memory rather than life putting their own internal view on their work. I thought the drawing worked although the black background on the drawing may not be conducive to solar printing? I printed the solar plate a number of times as the black background at times became almost grey, blurring the image. Eventually a reasonable print was made Fig.57.

Fig 57 printed in University print room December 17.



2017 August interview with artist Kathryn Rennie

Kathryn wished the interview to take place at Conquest House where she is artist in residence and also has her teaching studio there. Kathryn attended the Camberwell College of Art and has worked for 25 years as a commissioned and project artist and also teaches art. People are Kathryn's primary source of inspiration in a modern classical style and her portraits are sensitively painted. Within portraiture Kathryn endeavours to look deep within a soul to reveal an intimacy that is more than just a mere likeness. In 2006 Kathryn was commissioned by the Thalidomide Trust to paint 14 portraits celebrating the Thalidomide survivors 50 years on. Kathryn had been interested in the research and we had an hour long conversation regarding her work and its influences.

Kathryn with her painting of a family she had just completed. Fig.58



During this period a second drawing of Jeanette another volunteer from the charity followed. I had been pleased with the drawing as it showed Jeanette in an amusing mood, glancing up, hands to her face as if to stop a smile. She had been hesitant to be photographed and drawn as she did not want her age to show in the drawing. I explained a lived face shows a person's character and despite age still carries echoes of an earlier self

beneath. While drawing Jeanette I saw some of her earlier self in her face tempered with a forthright effervescing nature. This expressed in her eyes gazed directly at the viewer frank and direct. I thought the drawing would print well and made 2 solar plates printed in black ink. The first plate printed Fig. 59 has bitten marks which show Jeanette as if looking through an old mirror, is she a dream or reality, the second plate printed Fig. 60 giving a different feel to the work more realistic.

Printed in university print room during October 17.

Fig.59



Fig.60



2017 September home studio

A drawing of Andrew followed looking sleepy, comfortable and a little grumpy, it amused me to portray him this way. I printed the plate in January 2018 but there was a line across the plate. The photocopier must have had a line across it and this line came out on the acetate before placing it on the solar plate which I had not noticed Fig.61, a further photocopy of the drawing and then a new plate would be required Fig.62.

Fig.61



Fig 62



October 2017

I had finally managed to set a date and time with Jason Bowyer a member of the National Portrait Gallery who had his studio at the London Museum of Water & Steam in Middlesex. Jason has had numerous one man exhibitions and has won many awards for example, The Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, Royal Portrait Changing Faces Award. He has also had many residencies the latest during 2013 as Official War Artist REME Regiment, Camp Bastion, Afghanistan. Jason also featured on Channel 4 television, *Watercolour Challenge*, as an Art Expert and on BBC1 with David Dimbleby, *Britain and the Sea*. In 1988 Jason published *Starting Drawing* and 1991 *Painting from Observation* and is also editorial advisor for *The Artist*. Jason has taught at numerous establishments including Heatherley School of Fine Art – Advanced Portrait Painting, and at Hampstead School of Fine Art to name but a few of his specialised courses.

Jason greeted me warmly and we went for coffee and later to the Museum where six of his large paintings were hung in the gallery. We eventually proceeded to his studio situated in the grounds and the interview took place with permission granted to take photographs of Jason in front of one of his paintings, Fig.63 and in the studio Fig.64.

Fig.63



Fig.64



Material ordered from the supplier provided a solar plate I had not used before. It was not a photo polymer solar plate with a steel back but a photo polymer solar plate on thick plastic mylar Fig.65. However I decided to use the plate with another drawing of Richard, a full drawing and not just his face and hands as in plate Fig.66, eyes black but all seeing. There were problems as the mylar material continued to roll up every time I tried to ink the plate with black ink although I persevered.

Fig.65.



Fig.66



Although Fig.66 had been a reasonable print I thought perhaps I would use this type of material again although it would be for smaller prints as they would be more manageable than the large plate which kept rolling up, as one's hands were not large enough to keep it flattened. I had tried putting heavy objects onto the plate to keep it flat but this did not work either, it became too cumbersome and messy with the plate rolling up at every opportunity and the object's placed on the plate to keep it flat marking the ink. I had however enjoyed using this material as when etched by the sun you could see marks more clearly than on a polymer steel backed plate and one had more of a view of what the draft print would look like.

November/December 2017 & January 2018 university print room.

All the plates made during the summer and autumn were printed during these months.

February

A further print of Jana had been processed as I wished to make the chine colle fall through the lower edge of the printed work as the previous work with chine colle had looked cut off too soon: I wanted the work to flow. The print worked although another plate would be required as a line down the side of the plate was visible. A new plate made and in print.Fig.67.

Fig.67



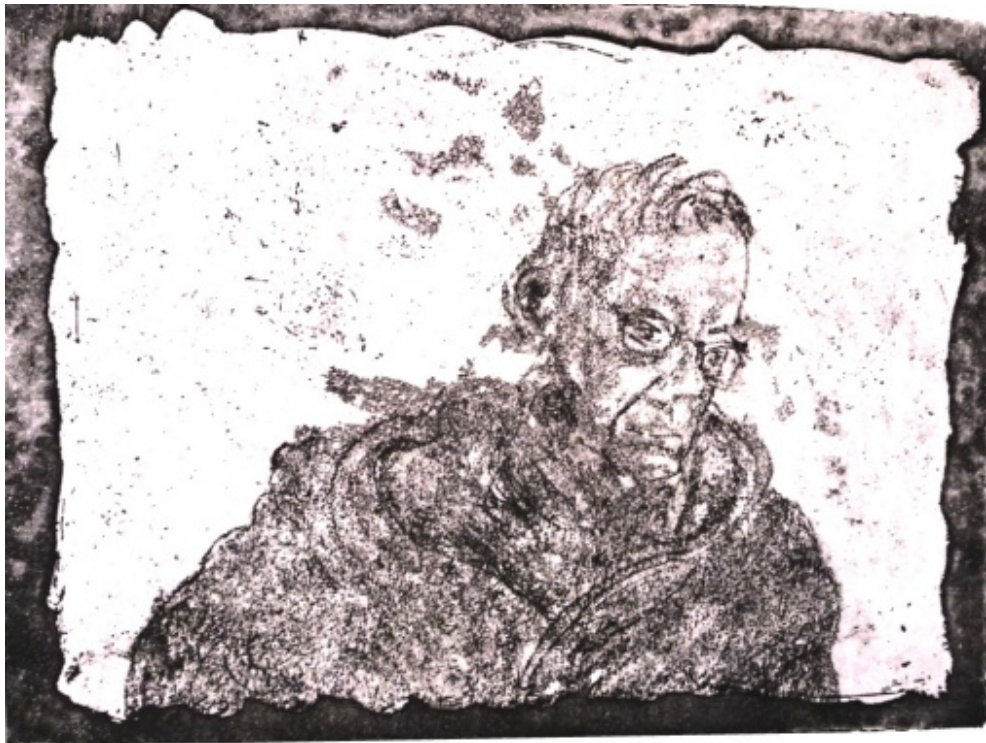
A drawing of George was etched on a zinc plate much smaller than the actual drawing I had previously completed. George is the spouse of another volunteer and had been very quiet during my visits to the charity. He seemed a very shy person and did not volunteer any information other than to say he enjoyed being a volunteer and his previous occupation had been an accountant. I portrayed George peering at me through his thick spectacle lenses very curious as to what I was about as I had been standing on chairs and kneeling down, drawing and photographing each person. George seemed inwardly very amused at my antics although his solemn face and demeanour is portrayed otherwise and I saw him as a curious little man.

Fig.68 had been the first plate etched. I then decided to etch another Fig.69 to give the portrait more gravitas and depth. This plate had been etched, placed in the acid, removed and a layer of stop out applied to the figure and background leaving a margin around the edge. It was then placed again in the acid to degrade before cleaning and printing. I thought this process would pull the viewer into the portrait more giving George more depth and interest as I found the print lacking, lacking what at the moment I had not decided? The print proved more successful with interesting marks and edges.

Fig.68



Fig.69



March

After drawing Giselle, I made another drawing in red pencil capturing a soft vulnerable look. I had been pleased with the drawing although it did not say what I wanted. I took a photocopy of the drawing and began cropping the image. After a few tries I obtained the image I wanted, which had been focusing on the soft gentle vulnerable look Giselle presented to me, getting rid of the irrelevant as the artist Marlene Dumas would say.

Fig.70 is a darker print which gives a hard look. Fig.71 is the plate of preference as the lighter look captured is soft and vulnerable. There are bite marks on the plate as it had been left a long time in the acid with previous marks already on the plate which had not been visible to the naked eye coming through. However I believe this enhances the portrait and the sitter's vulnerability.

Fig.70



Fig.71



April

A drawing of Janet emerged from the file and her conversation notes were: a confident lady who had been bored and not meeting many people had seen the notice in her church. Janet said she had been unaware of how the homeless lived but had grown into herself and was trying to make a difference. She had never felt threatened when talking to homeless people on the streets and felt more fulfilled now. I made a solar plate of Janet Fig.72 which is printed in black ink. Fig.73. I wanted the print to be more reflective of Janet's thoughts so decided to add chine colle which was tissue paper painted with blue water colour paint added to the etching. When the plate was printed it showed some foul marks and the chine colle added gave it another dimension and emulates the dimension Janet felt when working with the homeless.

Fig. 72



Fig.73



May & June.

The exhibition at the Sidney Cooper Gallery would be taking place from June 16th until 23rd with a private view on the 15th. The other two MA students would be sharing the space with me which was located in the back of the gallery with the BA photography students using the front of the gallery for their work. The two MA students and I met to discuss the spaces we would occupy and various ideas and negotiations took place. An invitation had been drafted and a completed draft approved by the three of us and the curator of the gallery. This had then been sent to the printers.

Fig.74



My work had to be collated and framed which continued during these months. The work taking two days to hang as sharing a space had its problems as a large wall with height would be required to exhibit the larger pieces of my work. I compiled a short introduction for the exhibition which had been displayed with my work.

Fig.75

My work is an exploration of one's fragilities, and strengths what it means to be human. Portraiture and figurative art can express the layers of one's life experiences/memories and these experiences pieced together make up the whole.

The work is expressed initially in working sketches which are then translated into etchings and screen prints using strong marks and coloured tones. It is very important to me regarding the work for the viewer to make up their own mind about their own truth that the art depicts.

June Nolan

In all I exhibited thirteen exhibits with feedback from the viewers being very positive, some of the comments were:

“A remarkable in depth look at what it is to be human.”

“The images are all moving and stir up feelings”

“Magnificent prints particularly ‘Larry’ full of character and life experience.”

“Brave insightful, sensitive work.”

Engaging and thought provoking – a sense of emotion(s) beautifully depicted especially 17

Thoughtful and very powerful. A very talented artist.

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