

15 Printed Portraits

Consent Case Studies

The Drawn Serigraph:
An Investigation Through Portraiture

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Introduction

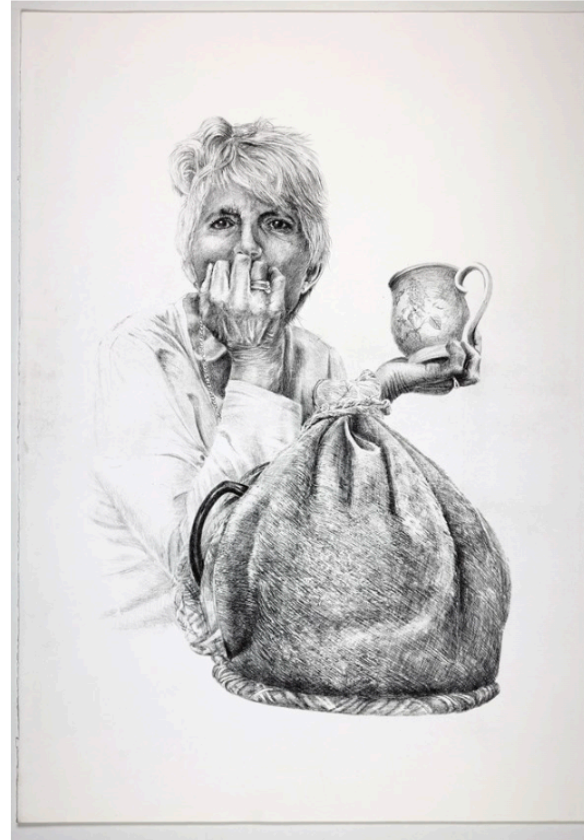
In a period of mass proliferation of smart phone self portraiture my research interrogates early twenty-first-century digital and analogue techniques aiming to inform ethical and meaningful fine art portraiture. The method is initiated through encounters to create photographs of potential subjects taken discreetly on a smartphone. This is to achieve an initial image that is an empathetic moment free of 'self projection', which becomes the basis for a portrait celebrating a subject's active self as I interpret it.

Material shifts happen through a process of intensive attention to the interpretation of the subject through gestural, hand made drawing on drafting films and bespoke surfaces that conclude with a silk screen printed portrait. In certain cultural contexts this activity may be considered as 'theft'. My research interrogates whether the 'attended to' marks can amend the potentially fraudulent nature of the 'taken' image and create a meaningful portrait to the subject, myself and viewers.

To complete the portrayal process, address the complex ethics, and establish robust research methods a 'retrospective consent form' has been developed. It is shared with subjects when we meet and I offer them a completed portrait of themselves.

The following case studies document and report upon the making, revealing, sharing and gifting exchange of the first edition of a printed portrait. On seeing the portrait a subject may decline consent to its making, however if they are comfortable with their representation they are offered the consent form which we co sign. Signatures indicate that the subject validates and accepts the portrait and that we may exhibit it beyond the confines of our relationship. The portrait, social media and our communications are also approved for inclusion in the research. Developing an understanding of the process to meaningful portraiture is the combination of the making and gifting that is charted in these case studies.

Elaine Shemilt



Elaine Shemilt. One colour Silkscreen. 84.1 x 118.9 2017

Portrait 1 - Elaine Shemilt

Elaine Shemilt is the subject of this portrait made when we met in Dundee, Scotland where she was Professor of Printmaking at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art. I made contact with Elaine after many years since we studied together at the Royal College of Art. When I explained I was embarking on a practice based PhD she encouraged me to visit her to discuss my plans. We met at the Dundee Contemporary Art gallery where Elaine has established a public access print studio.

She showed me round the Print Studio and on to the extensive printmaking department she had developed, as well as the associated research hub - inspiring! Her research and print practice has driven her to create, exhibit and present insightful work across continents.

She generously welcomed me to her home and offered me tea over breakfast. What followed was an intense and enjoyable three hours sharing of what print has meant to artists through its applications over the centuries, and what considerations I might make as I begin my research.

This insight and encouragement was a critical element in my decision to pursue this research. I also hoped I had made a start on a portrait that would celebrate Elaine and her generosity of spirit. I had made three discreet photos of her as she balanced her tea cup in one hand while resting her head on the other with her eyes looking out in deep thought. This image and my subsequent interpretation would be a test of my discreet smart phone methodology with Elaine as the first arbiter of its viability.



Original smart phone photograph. Elaine Shemilt. 2017

Portrait 1 - Elaine Shemilt

Sharing her portrait

After many months and experiments with mark resist drafting film, drawing with graphite sticks and silkscreen printing, I sent Elaine a digital file of her portrait. It is always with trepidation I send a portrait digitally: What will she think? Will she like it or not? Will she welcome it or not? A couple of days later she sent me a note:

*Wow Jonnie. That's amazing!
Thank you very much,*

XX Elaine

Six months later Elaine was invited to give a signature lecture at Birmingham City University and I was asked to introduce her, which I accepted with great pleasure. Beforehand we enjoyed an evening meal and the subject of her portrait came up:

Elaine : "I hesitated when I hovered over the jpg you sent in the email"

"What would it be like? would my hair be awful, would I be old. But when I saw it, it wasn't that superficial physicality I saw, but myself. I saw into myself."

"Later I shared it with my son and he said its like you are, Mum".

I was very happy that the portrait reflects elements of Elaine's persona and enabled her to see into herself and for her son to see his Mother. She was so honest in explaining her hesitation as she, like many of us, are concerned about our image and how others may perceive us. Her response and sharing with her son displays how the portrait has impact and is meaningful to them both.

Before her lecture we visited the print room and looked at some of my portrait prints including the one of her. She was a little taken aback by the size but I perceived she enjoyed its drawn and printmaking materiality. After her lecture I presented her with a tube containing her portrait before she left for the train back to Dundee.

Thanks Johnnie. I ran in and got on to an earlier train that goes all the way to Dundee, so the journey is grand. Thank you so much for the fabulous drawing. I'm holding on to it (it's not on the luggage rack). I shall have it framed xx

That's a result no journey changes. I am SO GLAD you like your drawing. Xx

I love it

Even as printmakers we referred to the silkscreen print as a 'drawing'. An early testament to the precise transposition of the drawn marks through serigraphy.



Mark resist exposure test



Mark resist exposure test

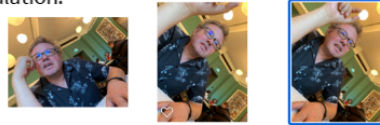
Adam Gee



Adam Gee. Two colour Silkscreen. 84.1 x 118.9. 2019

Portrait 2 - Adam Gee

Having not met for 12 months or so it was a pleasure to catch up with Adam. Together we made some breakthrough, award winning digital media projects for Maverick and Channel 4 Television. We enjoyed making innovative content and applications for distribution on the early internet through to interactive web channels. We discussed our recent activities which Adam shared with his customary enthusiasm and insights. I managed to discreetly make half a dozen smart phone pictures of him in full flight. On review I was happy to see one photograph that captured his enthusiasm and committed gesticulation.



6 smart phone
photographs of Adam
Gee



After working on the drawn print for a number of weeks I messaged Adam to invite him for another coffee, this time with a 'picture' for him. We met as planned at London's Wellcome Institute, the same venue we had met in previously. As we caught up over coffee my anxiety was building while Adam seemed really relaxed.

I could not hold back and said I've brought the picture I mentioned. Adam was interested as he took out the A1 rolled paper from the cardboard tube and unrolled it towards him. He was clearly surprised:

"I was not expecting this. Your message said you had 'a picture for me, not a portrait of me - I love it'".



Adam unrolling and unveiling his portrait

Portrait 2 - Adam Gee

Sharing An Unexpected Portrait

I explained that it was drawn out of a dynamic dark, swept charcoal background with a cut and pointed eraser, then some shadows drawn back in and silk screen printed in two colours. I did not draw the detail of the bird pattern on the shirt and left them as impressions to focus on the face and hand. He expressed how much this worked for him although he was amazed that he was looking at a large scale portrait of himself in a public restaurant.

"I love the hand, that eye is just right. I thought it was going to be a picture of something that related to our previous meeting. I'm so surprised I can't quite take it in"

As Adam sat holding the edge of his portrait he displayed a broad smile of pleasure and a degree of wonder at seeing himself represented in this way. I had not intentionally held back that I had made a portrait of him but kept it vague with the 'picture' description as I did not want to build up expectations. Adam did not arrive with preconceptions of a portrait, but experienced it with an immediacy.



Adam seeing his duotone portrait

Portrait 2 - Adam Gee

A woman sitting nearby was interested. I invited her to look at the portrait while Adam shared a photo on his family WhatsApp. She was impressed with the portrait of a guy she did not know but could see in front of her.

I introduced the retrospective consent form which Adam willingly signed as he understands the procedure of broadcast contributor's 'release forms'. We talked more about art, media, writing, collaboration, filmmaking and families before heading off in separate directions, he with his portrait under his arm.

As we left Adam thanked me again and I expressed how much it was a pleasure that the surprise had worked out well. Later on his 'Arkangel' Instagram channel Adam shared a photo from the meeting. He expressed to his 1,000 followers how much he had enjoyed the gift: 'One of the best presents I've ever had'.



Adam sharing his portrait on WhatsApp and Instagram



1 like
aarkangel With #glasses & without - one of the best #presents I've ever had - a surprise #gift from my friend @jonnie_turpie of Maverick, part of his PhD in #printmaking & contemporary #portraiture

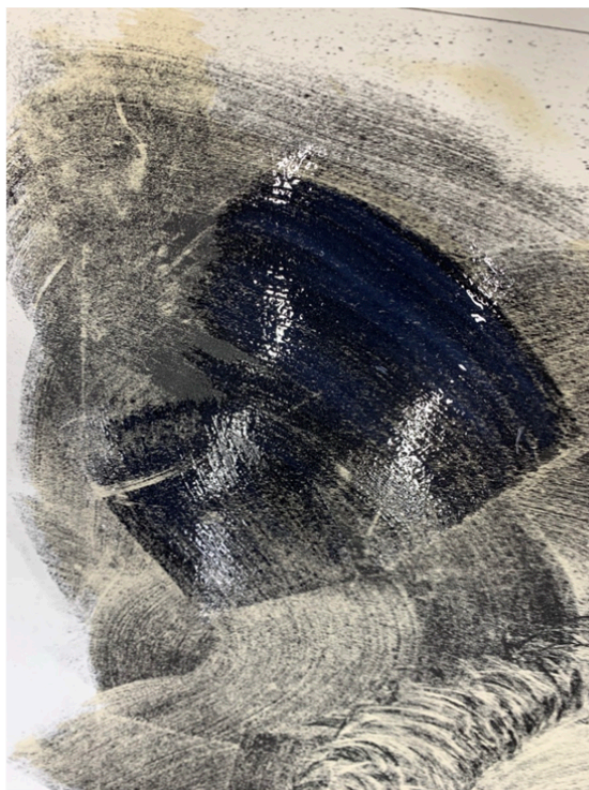
Portrait 2 - Adam Gee

The consent form was co-signed by subject and artist at point of exchange and both parties retained a copy for their respective records.

Adam decided to have his print framed by his local framer. Framing is a testament to how much he valued the portrait and that it has meaning for him. He selected a brushed metal frame reminiscent of the print, but before he could collect it the corona virus lockdown was imposed upon us. Three months later he picked it up and announced it on his Facebook page. An outward expression of his validation of the portrait and its meaningfulness.

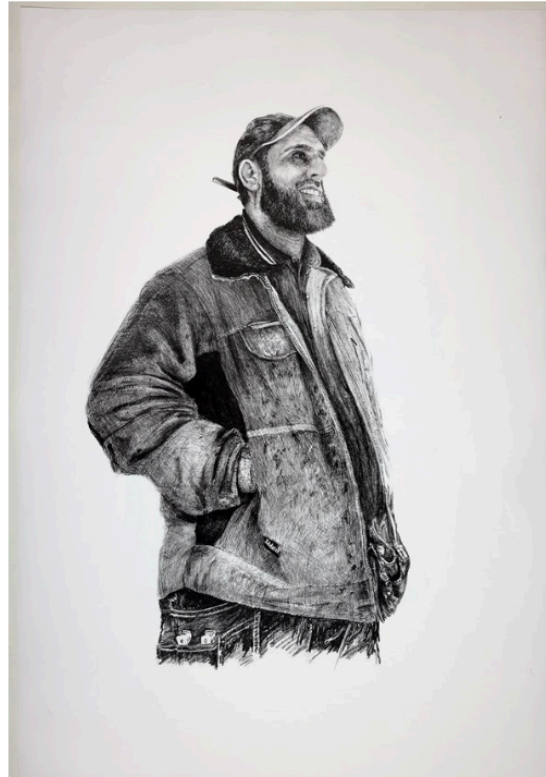


'Jonnie Turpie's portrait of me finally released from being covid hostage at Frameworks in Crouch End.'



Charcoal and Varnish sweeps

Afzal Ahmed



Afzal Ahmed. Carpenter's Peak. One Colour silkscreen.
Bread and Butter Paper 101x68cm. 2020

Portrait 3 - Afzal Ahmed

Afzal is a carpenter described by many as having a strong personality, who rarely holds back on his views on many subjects from his carpenter client designs through to art. I have met him on a number of occasions and felt it would be a personal challenge to make a portrait reflecting Afzal. He had recently returned from a Haj pilgrimage and we had a deep conversation about the experience.

Not long afterwards I witnessed him at a public drawing event (Soul Fire Sunday) following completion of his carpentry work on the event structures. With great interest, he engaged with the artists as they carried out varied large scale public drawings. In traditional working style his carpenter pencil protruded from his hair/cap. His working jacket retained the residue of past jobs and his dark belt held the tools of his trade.

I began to see that I might capture his image in discussion as the basis for a body length portrait. On review of the smart phone photographs there was a particular image that reflected my impressions of Afzal's committed engagement and demeanour.



Original smart phone photographs. Afzal Ahmed

Traditional Muslim Faith precludes human representation as it may be perceived as a form of idolatry. As I had collaborated on portraits of Muslim converts with my Muslim studio colleague I consulted with him on my making a portrait of Afzal and decided to continue with my portrait process, before sharing with Afzal for his view.

Portrait 3 - Afzal Ahmed

Sharing his portrait

Taking inspiration from the colours at the event I experimented with a number of flat colour printed backgrounds as well as the monotone black ink. I had brought the finished prints back from the print room to my shared studio where at another art event we met again. This time with his daughter and he asked if he could show her my studio? I agreed, but mentioned there maybe a surprise for him.

We entered the studio with painted, drawn images hanging and pitched against the walls. One of the working prints of Afzal stood against the back wall. I introduced them to it which was met with surprise. Both Afzal and his daughter beamed in recognition of the portrayal. I turned to the drawing table where I had 4 different print interpretations. First was the 'clean' monotone portrait. Afzal responded with his demonstrative smile:

"You've got me right. You've even got the detail of my tools. I like the rough drawing of the belt and the pencil."

His daughter expressed her enthusiasm:

"Its amazing, I've never seen him like this."

I shared the monotone, orange and blue versions and asked which would he like for himself. Afzal chose the monotone and commented: "I am standing proud". I asked what shall we title it? Together we decided: Carpenter's Peak which I added along with my signature. I explained the consent form rationale and we both signed it. There was no rejection on Faith grounds. The impromptu meeting, portrait revealing and gifting had been a meaningful experience for all three of us.



Sharing and selecting. Afzal Ahmed



Blue ink swatch

Paul Kenny



Paul Kenny, Photographer.#1. One colour Silkscreen.
84.1 x 118.9. 2018

Portrait 4 - Paul Kenny

This photograph was selected from a number, discreetly made on a walk on Cheswick beach, Northumbria. Paul has prepared for the sea breeze with his cap, scarf, waterproof coat and a small slr camera. As an artist Paul uses detailed time consuming methods to create images using analogue and digital darkroom studio techniques and I hold his work in high esteem. His slr is for personal and non artistic use, so to include it in the portrait is a play on his artistic practice – i.e. he will invariably never create his photographic art with a camera, but here he has one slung around his neck as if a ‘photographer’.

Paul and I were both taught by Geoff Lowe at Newcastle Polytechnic fine art department. I remember Geoff saying in one of his passing remarks that cameras are like male jewelry. This stuck with me as a comment on the camera as male appendage way back then in the early 70’s, (nineteen seventies) when I was tussling with images and art created through photography, print, film, book and poster making in an era of ‘conceptual art’.

40 Years on Paul and I have met again through the ubiquitous democracy of the internet and social media which had only been a glint in Sir Tim Berners Lee’s eye back then.



Paul Kenny. Original selected smart phone photograph



Paul Kenny. Original smart phone photographs with selections

Portrait 4 - Paul Kenny

Sharing his portraits

As I was at the beginning of the research and each of the smart phone photos of Paul offered a different insight, I made three portraits of him. One on the beach with camera; one with his beloved greyhound Millie across his chest and one where he is animatedly gesticulating from his chair at home.

I shared them via email: 'I've been trying new fine silkscreen meshes and fine detail emulsions to make prints from my drawings this summer and I wanted to make portrait of and for you because you have been so welcoming over the past couple of years since we reconnected.'

'When you shared your return to art it really inspired me to think that I too might return to making art after all those years. But when I settled down to make a portrait I couldn't decide which would be the single image that would do it. So I made three!'

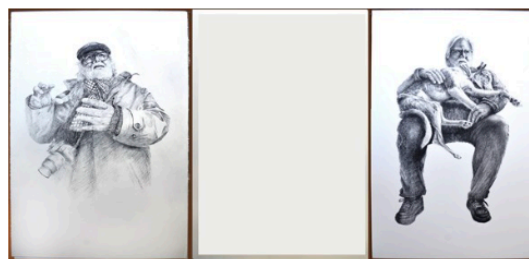
'I like the idea that there is a triptych! I hope you do too. They are A1. If you'd like to know more about them, the process and would like prints let me know and I can arrange when I'm next up.'

A reply dropped into my inbox which I opened with trepidation and enthusiasm.

Hi Jonnie,

I'm flattered, both by the kind words and the images. I feel it's only fair to be honest, two of them I really love and feel they are "me", the middle one I'm not so sure about ...I think I look a bit like an insane Michelin man.....you've caught all the things about myself I hate...but I suppose that's what portraits are about.

Whatever, I'd love to see them, when are you next up?



Paul Kenny. 2 of 3 portraits.
One colour silkscreen. 84.1 x 118.9 x 3. 2018

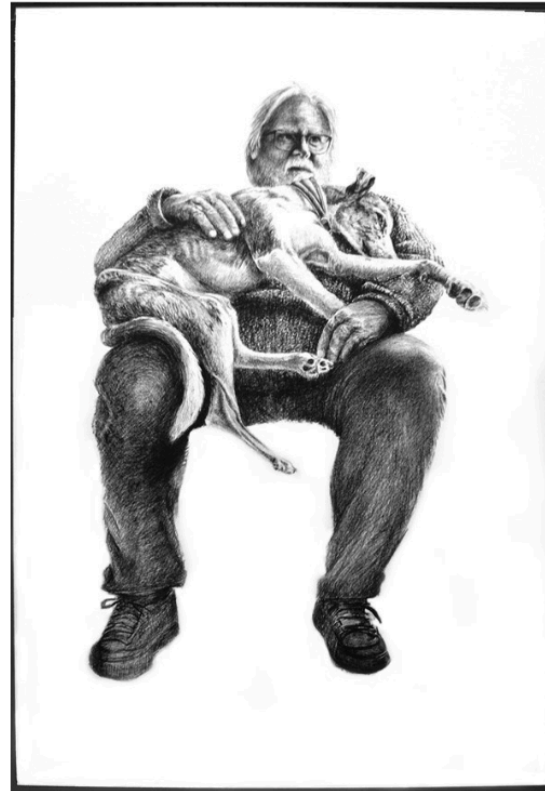
Portrait 4 - Paul Kenny

Sharing his portraits

Paul's rejection of the second portrait was a bit of a blow so early on in the research. However, I respected his view and got back to him to say so, and that I would be in Northumberland in a couple of months and would bring the prints for him to see for himself.

When I visited, we enjoyed each other's company then there came a point when we shared the portraits. As always it is a tense moment for perhaps for both artist and subject. In his studio we unrolled all three and Paul commented: "Hey these are great, I'm going to show them to my kids." He looked hard at #2 and confirmed that while he respected the artwork, he would be grateful if I would not exhibit it. I did not enter into a discussion about his view, nor try to convince him otherwise and confirmed I would not show it. Now the triptych is a diptych.

This was the first and only time I have had a portrait rejected by a subject. It allowed me to reach the view that if rejected then a print should not be made public beyond artist and subject. Later I came to the position that I would offer to destroy the artwork and all the assets that had been collected or created in its making, thereby agreeing to the subject's determination. This became the basis of the clause in the retrospective consent form to legally offer the final decision as to a portrait's viability to its subject.



Paul Kenny with Millie. #3. Silkscreen. 84.1 x 118.9. 2018

Caroline Norbury CBE



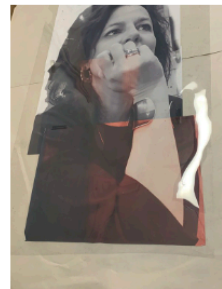
Caroline Norbury. Two colour Silkscreen. 84.1 x 118.9. 2020

Portrait 5 - Caroline Norbury CBE

Sharing her portraits

In her role as Creative UK CEO Caroline travels the country meeting filmmakers, creatives and entrepreneurs. When in the Midlands we will meet. We have known and worked together for many years most recently on the board of Creative England. On this occasion we met in a theatre foyer and during our catch up I saw once again how astute and strategic she is and managed to capture a moment with her hand to her head, that seemed to reflect her smart thoughtfulness.

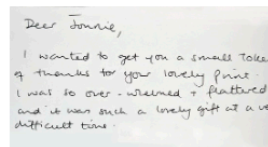
Following making the portrait I emailed her to let her know I had done so from that meeting. I included a jpeg of the monotone and magenta version for her view on the portrait, and which version she preferred. She replied definitively for the magenta image and that she was overwhelmed by my 'kindness' in making her portrait. She commented that it was not the conventional 'to-camera pose' and that the unselfconscious image I had achieved through the discreet approach 'did not show her as vain'. As this was during the pandemic period we could not meet so I offered to send her the 'big print'. In return Caroline sent me a card thanking me for her portrait and indicating its meaningfulness. When we did manage to meet months later in her home, there was her bright magenta portrait framed on the brick kitchen wall to be shared with friends and family.



Original photograph in readiness for drawing



Caroline Norbury CBE.
Framed Two colour Silkscreen



Thank you card from Caroline

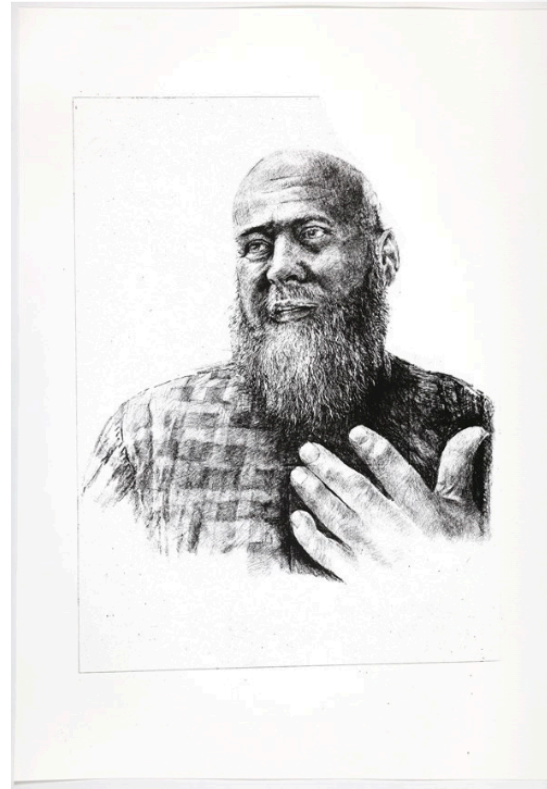
Dear Jonnie,

I wanted to get you a small token of thanks for your lovely print. I was so overwhelmed and flattered, and it was such a lovely gift at a very difficult time.

Love Caroline x

Card translation

Rashid Campbell



Rashid Campbell. Rashid in the Flow.
One colour Silkscreen. 84.1 x 118.9. 2021

Portrait 6 - Rashid Campbell

Sharing his portrait

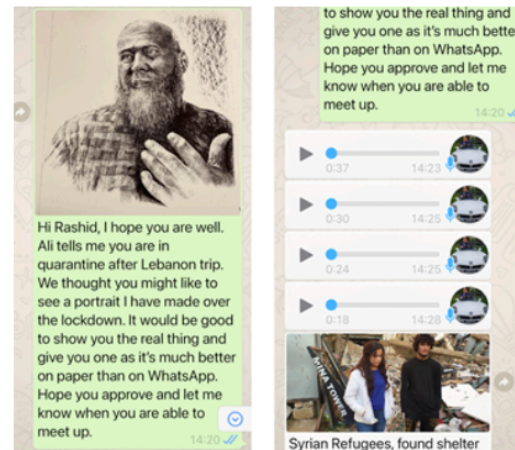
Rashid is an active charity worker in Balsall Heath, Birmingham UK. He was aware of my portrait practice and had said, with a glint in his eye, that he would be happy to be drawn. Pre Christmas 2020 I found myself sitting opposite him in a restaurant as he engaged in active conversation.

Photographs from the evening captured Rashid's character and the prominent hand movements emphasised his enthusiastic engagement with the assembled group. One in particular reflected these characteristics and became the basis for a drawn portrait. I was experimenting with bespoke surfaces and selected a hand sanded acrylic with subtle but expressive grain and scratched crevices, that would offer additional drawn mark opportunities.

Once printed our mutual friend Mohammed Ali suggested I share them and gave me Rashid's WhatsApp contact as he was in quarantine following a trip to support Syrian Refugees in Lebanon. I was reticent to share small images on WhatsApp as they were low resolution and would probably be viewed on a small phone screen but Ali encouraged me as he was interested to hear Rashid's response.



Original smart phone restaurant photographs, including selected image



Whatsapp message to Rashid and his voice messages back.
Transcript overleaf

Portrait 6 - Rashid Campbell

Immediately voicemail messages appeared on my WhatsApp:

"Wow hi John wow. I'm a, uh I'm lost for words I'm honoured, flattered and I've got the same shirt on .. laughs.. its my favourite shirt .. I'm just on the way back from Lebanon on the train heading towards Birmingham and that looks fantastic. Inshallah. After a couple of weeks of quarantine we can meet up. Thank you very much mate.

I'm just looking at it now and I think you've I describe myself to people, or people describe me Rashid as a grafter ... and I think you've caught that in this picture and that's how I like to consider myself, as a grafter, go out there and do the work. Get it done. Laughs. So I can see the labour on my face. I love it.

I think it's got a bit of a Paul Newman, Cool Hand Luke to it with the blue eyes, I mean obviously you've used pencils and stuff but you've captured the blue eyes brilliant. I just wish I'd trimmed my beard a bit more, but I suppose it adds to the character.

Fantastic."

When we met in the studio I turned over the A1 sized monotone print. He was impressed with the full size, textured image of himself in action. I explained that the print was a new experiment using sanded acrylic with gestural marks that the graphite had lodged in. The most prominent sanded marks are on the shirt and hand, but looking closely there are gestural scratch marks in the face and forehead. These are not mimetic marks but indicate something beyond likeness in the portrait interpretation. Something of Rashid's engaging character. These contrast with the descriptive scalpel highlight marks scratched into the dark graphite of the full beard.

We discussed what the title should be and decided on 'Rashid in the Flow' to reference his love of Hip Hop culture.

We took some photos and selfies to share with his friends and family. I signed, stamped, dated and titled the portrait and we counter signed the consent forms.



Rashid in the studio

Portrait 6 - Rashid Campbell

Rashid was thankful and announced he was heading to his Mother's house and would present the portrait to her. We discussed his Mother and Father's family and his own. It seemed the portrait would be a proud recognition of himself. We viewed the prints below an earlier approved portrait of Hamza, 'Jacket Man'. Rashid asked if I would take a photo of him holding his portrait alongside Hamza's in recognition that both people are converts to the Muslim Faith.

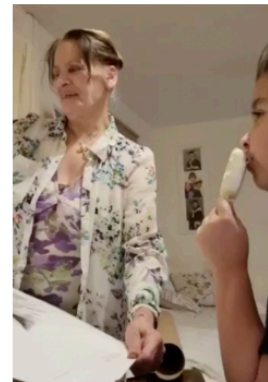
This was a genuinely warm exchange in the Moseley School of Art studio in Balsall Heath, the neighbourhood Rashid was brought up in and now works to deliver charitable aid. We shared our Celtic heritages. We co signed the consent form and I rolled it and his portrait into a cardboard tube for transport and presented it to Rashid.



Rashid's holds his portrait in front of his friend Hamza

Later that night I received a WhatsApp video from Rashid's home where he recorded his Mother opening the tube and seeing the portrait for the first time. She was surrounded by her family and husband to whom Rashid explained how the portrait has come about.

The dialogue between the family is heartwarming, meaningful and a further justification of making portraits from discreet photographs for retrospective sharing and consent.



Rashid's smart phone video of sharing his portrait with his Mother and Family

Kevin Atherton



Kevin Atherton. One colour Silkscreen. 84.1 x 118.9. 2019

Portrait 7 - Kevin Atherton

Sharing his portrait

Kevin is a practicing artist and we have known each other for many years when we worked with the new art form of video. At that time he made 'In Two Minds', a performance piece he revisited at Birmingham's IKON Gallery in 2019. After the show we went for something to eat with textile artist Susie Freeman. Over a curry Kevin enquired about my PhD portraiture. He has a doctorate and is an experienced fine art lecturer and on seeing some of the portraits on my phone he suggested I was 'reinventing scraperboard'. I could not work out if this was a back handed compliment or one of his exuberant observations. 'Scraperboard' is made when an artist scratches off dark ink to reveal a white layer beneath. It is also an children's introduction to image making.



Original smart phone photograph 2019

I was inspired to make a portrait and managed to make a phone photo that on review provided the basis for a portrait reflecting Kevin's direct and expressionistic persona. I decided to create a drawing with an eraser on a dark carbon washed surface, 'a la scraper board'. On satisfactory completion of the print I tentatively messaged Kevin on Facebook:

'Hi, Are you around next Thursday afternoon? I have made a print following your constructive comment that I might be reinventing 'scraper board' which I'd like to share / give you if you would like it. I am in London then and could bring it down.'

An immediate message came back.

'Hi Jonnie, That would be wonderful, the morning would be best for me. I could meet you at Euston or RCGP (Susie's show). Best, Kevin'

The meeting was in place. No going back. The edition of 4 prints were numbered, stamped and signed. No1 was covered with tissue paper and rolled into cardboard tube for transport to London.

I looked around the RCGP Café and gallery. Kevin in signatory black Stetson and overcoat walks towards me: 'Hi'. It was great to see Susie too. We talked for 20 mins over coffees and lemonade. It's always good to talk, but this conversation is premised on the invitation to share an artwork and we are aware of this looming moment. Perhaps because of Kevin's artist status, directness of character and Susie's valued presence my anticipation and anxiety rose.

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Portrait 7 - Kevin Atherton

I called a halt and asked Kevin: 'Do you want to see your portrait?' 'Yes let's go'.

As I reached for the tube and print it was the first time I had experienced Kevin a tad anxious. Matching my own.

'Are you ok to see it here in public?' 'Yeah come on then.'

I spun the paper to hold the top and unfurl towards Kevin, the subject, who revealed it as he opened towards himself. The portrait could be seen underneath the cloudy tissue paper.

"Wow look at this."

Kevin held the bottom as I pulled the tissue away to reveal the portrait in its material drawn and printed reality. Kevin was unusually speechless taking in his image with the making and scale of the interpretation.



Sharing his portrait with Kevin Atherton

Susie smiled and stood up to take pictures of the moment of sharing.

Kevin pointing to his face:

"This is just right, the jowls. It's a bit of a Shankly Half time team talk: 'Get out there and score.'"

JT: 'You are animated as you are when you converse. The hand is in movement. Your body is a part of the communication and the portrait. You are fully committed to your subject.'

Susie: "The energy in the arm highlights the darkness of the polo. The one you wear for the performance now and did 40 years ago when it was first performed at the Serpentine."

"These Finger prints - that's authentic. The highlight of the eyelid is just enough to describe it. I'm honoured. Is it an edition?"

"Yes of 4. You have no 1."



Portrait 7 - Kevin Atherton

I asked, if he would mind signing a consent form? He responded:

"Do they make you get this signed?"

jT: 'Because of my methodology I've developed a retrospective consent form for this moment of sharing with you. The portrait will only be kept if you accept it and consent to it being made public. Otherwise I will destroy all traces of the portrait from photograph to drawings and completed print.'

"I'll sign anything. This is so good. It's going to be framed. A thin black frame with white card border. Not too much, let it stand on its own."

The portrait was not only meaningful to Kevin, but he also perceived my artistic process and motivation:

"I love it. The background is a part of it. Its not just drawing or printmaking though. There are conceptual underpinnings, and in your methodology. Phone, drawing, print, sharing."



Kevin signs the consent form



Kevin agrees to have his photograph taken, content with his portrait

We talked more about reflections and people we might reconnect with when we sit down together again.

Hugs all round. I head off into the city, to find a quiet space to write down my recollections of this warm and important experience.

Later on Kevin's Facebook :

 **Kevin Atherton**
22 hrs · 🌐
With artist Jonnie Turpie earlier today who has produced this terrific portrait of me. Photo: Susie Freeman.



Yuchen Yang



Yuchen Yang, two colour Silkscreen, 42 x 59.4, 2018

Portrait 8 - Yuchen Yang

To understand how the addition of textures to the surrounds of portraits might influence their perception I experimented with a range of marks. Differing gestural marks offered contrasts with the mimetic mark making of likeness and figuration. The prints were being made in the Birmingham School of Art Print room along with MA students. One student Yuchen Yang from Guangzhou carried out her accomplished painterly work as well as experimenting with etching and litho techniques. During a conversation with her and pianist Didi Xiao I captured an image of her bright, artistic, thoughtful demeanour.

This initiated a drawn portrait on mark resist drafting film. I considered what additional marks might enhance the image and point to her artistic taste and skills. I had recently tested vine black, a calcined charcoal pigment made from grape vines, with a history of application by artists. When the vine black was spread by brush it quickly dispersed into beads of pigment rather than retaining the even brush marks on the mark resist. This was reminiscent of Yuchen's watercolours and stone litho drawings of octopuses. I freely brushed some light beaded marks around the edges of the paper to give an indication of the mark making. An additional layer of blue wash was applied to further echo her painterly watercolour techniques.

Before Yuchen completed her course and returned to China I messaged her to come and see the portrait and perhaps chose one for herself.



Yuchen Yang accepting her portrait. 2018



Yuchen approved the portraits and selected the version with the most background textures. Later she posted her thanks on her instagram channel

Portrait 8 - Yuchen Yang

Yuchen and I stayed in touch after she returned to China however in 2019 the Covid virus struck, first in China and then throughout the world. The lockdown restrictions in China were severe. As a diversion from her experience of being interned in a hi-rise tower block I offered to make a second portrait to highlight her, and other people who were 'locked down', and as a counter to the negative mass media coverage of the 'China virus':

'I was thinking about you when I heard about your situation being inside all the time. If you would like another portrait I'd be up for drawing one to take your mind off things.

Take some selfies or maybe your boyfriend could take some photos of you and send them and I'll see if I can make a new portrait. I have some new 'Gifu' paper that I could try. Its VERY thin 90gsm and better than tissue paper!

Just a thought. No pressure. Take care and keep safe.'

Yuchen: .Nice to have your email. I am good and safe so far and I already back to Guangzhou from home. My boss let us stay at home and work on line. I also keep drawing as long as I have time. So I should not have the risk of infection (as well as my art, haha. kidding).

Thank you for you invitation to be your model again, its exciting, haha. Is it a new project or just for leisure? I do have some portrait with high quality. please let me check file. I'll send you soon.'

'A new portrait would be part of my research as I am experimenting with new silk screen printmaking techniques, papers and colour! I thought it would also be good to make a portrait at such a long distance away and in these difficult times. Its also different to ask you first if you would like a portrait to be made.'



Yuchen sent five photographs. I chose one that I perceived to be more considered than the others to be the basis for a portrait from a distance. Later Yuchen told me that it had been taken by a student photographer friend.



Photograph from Yuchen Yang.
Courtesy of a student of photography

Portrait 8 - Yuchen Yang



Yuchen Yang #2. Montone silk screen.
Cartridge Paper. 29.7 x 42.0 cm. 2020

The resultant printed image on the translucent paper had an atmosphere of isolation, which the torn edges enhanced and was redolent of the subject's situation and reflective of my motivation to embark on its making. It's flimsy translucency was hung in a deserted gallery space to move weightlessly in the airflows. I electronically shared the print images with Yuchen, still in China:

I drew and printed a portrait on buff cartridge paper. I pursued another on very fine Japanese Gifu paper. At 9gsm the extremely delicate but strong paper was not held securely by the vacuum and the ink acted as a glue adhering it to the silk screen. To counter this the paper was taped on all four edges, printed and the screen successfully lifted away from the printed image on the fragile paper. However, on removing the tape the delicate paper tore inconsistently along the edges.



'I have been drawing and made a silk screen print! I chose the portrait where you are looking directly out. It seemed to be a strong and thoughtful image of you. I hope you like it. I've made one on white and one off-white paper. Let me know what you think.'

Yuchen: "Nice to receive your email and the prints. The prints are amazing! It looks better that the image printed on light yellowing paper. The white one looks good as well! And the drawing marks are very fine. I love the portrait."

I sent the prints to some of my friends to ask some feedback. A close friend said that the portrait looks like me a lot. Especially when I am shy or nervous. My hand will scratch or touch my face unconsciously. The portrait catches the moment".

'Thanks so much for sending your photos. It's been great to make your portrait again and a positive experience at the time of the frightening virus news.'

Dr Ian Sargeant



Ian Sargeant. PhD Passion. Two colour Silkscreen.
Bread and Butter Paper, 101x68cm. 2019

Portrait 9 - Dr Ian Sargeant

In December 2019 I attended a lecture by Ian Sargeant, a PhD researcher in the University Arts and Media Faculty: 'Visual Representations and Cultural (Re)Constructions of Black British Masculinities in 21st Century Birmingham'. Ian enthusiastically presented and was silhouetted against the flat bright border of his slides. His hand gestures emphasised his delivery and created a visual drama. I made some smart phone photographs and was encouraged by the possibilities of a dramatic and active portrait. I shared them with Ian, offered him the use of them and the thought of a portrait.



Ian Sargeant. Original photographs. 2019

'Hi Ian, Great to see your lecture y'day and to hear your enthusiasm for your research. Good for all students to hear of your pathway to PhD success. Inadvertently I sat in a great position to see your silhouette as you presented with many expressive hand movements. I took some phone photos. Feel free to use them if you wish.

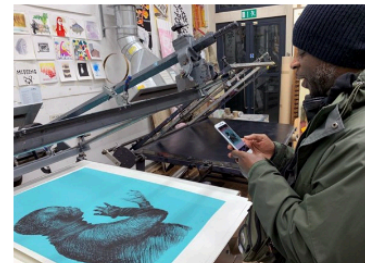
I also edited a couple to focus on you and your hands. If you like them I could perhaps work them up into a printed portrait as is my practice!'

"Hi Jonnie, thanks for coming and supporting my efforts I really enjoyed talking about my research and hearing a little about their work. The photos are great and you really have captured my gestures. Thanks for these I knew I used my hands a lot when I speak and this is a great illustration of this movement. I will definitely come by your studio at some point".

email : 13 December 2019. Subject: Re: portrait

'I've done more work on your portrait and if you are around Margaret St on Monday or Wednesday I can show you where I am. I hope you will enjoy it and you can let me know what you think, before I make a final version before xmas! '

We met and I shared the monotone and blue background prints. He was impressed and photographed them for his social media channels. I stamped, signed and titled them for him: 'PhD Passion'



Ian Sargeant. Photographs portraits to share

Portrait 9 - Dr Ian Sargeant

Our collaboration extended as we submitted a dual presentation to a PGR Research Festival:

A Collaborative Conversation

Ian Sargeant – Visual Representations of Black British Masculinities; Jonnie Turpie - Contemporary Portraiture - Smart Phone Photography, Drawing and Printmaking.

The presentation was a positive, public way of sharing our appreciation of the research and the initial output of the portrait. I continued to write about the portrait process and gestural approach which was shared with Ian as I submitted it to the UWE Centre For Print Research IMPACT Journal: Gestural drawing for serigraphy.

IMPACT Printmaking Journal | Issue Two | Autumn 2020

uniformity, and leaves no evidence of the human hand in the final print. (Fig 9. 6 Flat blue, prints) I hoped that the consistent flat printed colour would contrast with the gestural drawn marks. Any perceived imperfection could detract from this. Serigraphy brings together the fine art printmaking of the gestural marks with the flat blue of industrial print processes (Saff, D. and Sacilotto, D.1978:291). (Fig 10. Monotone portrait printed on blue and white)

The final stage was to invite Sargeant to the studio to view the final work and to receive his approval. He enthusiastically accepted the print, which was duly dated, signed and numbered: No 1.

POSTSCRIPT

Since this paper was written in January 2020, the world has changed. Coronavirus has altered the way human beings relate to each other physically and mentally. The death of George Floyd and the concurrent rise of the Black Lives Matter movement has brought awareness of the level of racism pervading societies to the fore. The making of the portrait described in this paper was an acknowledgement of Ian Sargeant's passion for his subject and his commitment to wider representation of Black cultural contribution.



Figure 10



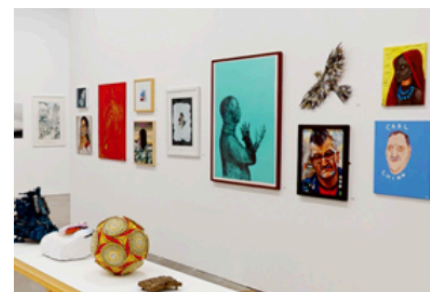
Figure 11

Gestural drawing for serigraphy. Impact Journal. 2020

<https://impact-journal-cfpr.uwe.ac.uk/index.php/impact/article/view/45/38>

The article postscript situates the portrayal period during the experience of the Coronavirus which altered the way human beings relate to each other physically and mentally. Concurrently the death of George Floyd and the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement has brought awareness of the level of racism pervading societies to the fore.

The making of the portrait was an acknowledgement of Ian's passion for his subject. As well as being meaningful to us as individuals it is the most overt statement of socio-cultural meaningfulness of the research portraits. The portrait will be included in future exhibitions as an artistic contribution to the overdue changes that BLM has brought forward. This paper, my prints and associated research will keep reflecting on the context of current issues, striving for a post COVID, anti-racist future.



The first opportunity to exhibit the portrait was at the Ikon Gallery in Birmingham

Adrian Packer CBE



Adrian Packer. One colour Silkscreen. 84.1 x 118.9. 2019

Portrait 10 - Adrian Packer CBE

I have known Adrian since he became Deputy Head of the BOA creative academy. He went on to establish the first academy at a Premiership football club; took on the immense challenge of taking the "Trojan Horse" school through a national trauma and most recently to lead an Academy Trust of 4 secondary and one primary school.

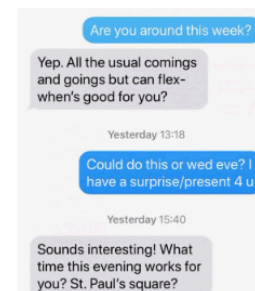
Recently he took on a government challenge to produce a child focussed celebration of Holocaust Remembrance: 'Echo Eternal'. He had conceived and directed a group of diverse children of disadvantage, ability and latent talent to express themselves through music, film and dance. He had selflessly focussed on delivering this event and on the night, modestly refusing to celebrate the deserved awarding of the No 10, Points of Light that morning. He was focussed on ensuring the children were prepared, confident and ready to go onstage and celebrate the survivors with Echos for the future.

During and after the event I wanted to pay tribute to him. It inspired me to revisit smart phone photographs I had made of him 18 months earlier for a possible portrait.



Adrian is a unique mix of selfless, ebullience, confidence, commitment, and by his own thespian admission vanity. All of which I wanted to reflect.

Over the coming weeks I made a drawn silk-screen portrait and wanted to complete the venture by sharing it with him. I was content with how the portrait had developed. However, it would only be possible to accept the portrait was successful when Adrian's opinion was embraced. It was time for that moment. I texted him on a Monday lunchtime:



I rolled the prints up in newsprint and masking tape. They would have to be unrolled in front of the subject – Anxiety levels rose.

Portrait 10 - Adrian Packer CBE

I arrived at the venue near his office. Adrian was with colleagues. I did not bring the portrait with me as I wanted to ensure he was comfortable with receiving his gift in public. When his colleagues left, we caught up on the state of the world, Birmingham, the future of arts and education. We talked and talked but ... what about the surprise gift?

'I'll get it in a moment, but I should give you some background on where I am.' My PhD research is developing as well as being challenging. For the first time in my life I am concentrating on portraiture. Individual people. As a film-maker I recorded many people for programmes. We reminded ourselves that I had interviewed Adrian for a prospective programme on the reality of the unhelpfully titled 'Trojan Horse' episode. He had trusted me to bring cameras into the school and interview him, pupils and staff.

A static portrait differs from a filmed interview watched on a screen over time. If successful, it reflects for the viewer, much of the subject's complexities and over riding qualities, in a single image.

I went out to the car to get the surprise, and laid it on the table. It sat there, rolled up. Pregnant. We talked further about the process, the ethics, consent and trust as we prepared for the moment of sharing. Anticipation was in the air. I expressed how tense I was:

'You may not like it, and if you don't, I will not share it any further.'

Adrian exclaimed: "You are tense!!!! Is this being filmed? You send me a text out of the blue and offer me a surprise present - what's going on? I want to know."

I removed the masking tape and unrolled the prints and held each end to reveal the portrait. Adrian was visibly moved by seeing himself reflected in a large singular manner. This was not vanity but a sense of wonderment and personal revelation on seeing himself as perhaps, never before.

He explained how he can turn on a particular look, posture, smile for the camera. But that this is different:

"I am caught unaware, which you have done to reflect me in my reality, not my pose(s)."

Portrait 10 - Adrian Packer CBE

Adrian touched the ink on paper, the portrait, the face, the hands. The materiality of the image drew him to it. He ran his fingers across the title at the bottom of the print.

"You have made a tribute to me. I am not used to accepting such accolades, even when I receive them out of the best reasons."

I explained my rationale. That in many cases I do not want to 'sully/disrupt/interfere' with a friendship and trust with the subject, by making a portrait that unsatisfactorily reflects them. But to make one that is worthy of sharing, and ultimately gifting to them.

Adrian: "I get what it's about. Because you are trusting of the relationship between you and the subject, without asking for consent, before you go on to make the work. You are flipping it all on its head. I understand the necessity for consent. But this joyous sharing is based on our mutual trust. I don't want to read it. I'll sign it out of love. We trust each other. Your portrait shows that."



Adrian Packer contemplates his finished portrait. March 2019

Adrian: "Art is the space for debate. For coming together to share without parameters. This is Joyous. It is a gift."

Early experimental Portraits

The following five portraits have been gifted to the subjects and positively acknowledged by them personally and through public exhibition.



Early in my research I gathered smart phone photographs to initiate the drawn and printed portraits. In doing so I advanced the practice techniques and refined the consent procedures displayed in the previous ten examples. The following five portraits were made in this early developmental period and offered opportunity for practice experiments. They were shared with and gifted to the subjects who agreed to have them imparted beyond our engagement to third parties, through exhibitions or publication. I am hugely grateful for their contribution to the establishment of the formal research without which it would not have come to fruition.

Nav

Making this print has been an enjoyable journey delving into new techniques to create an analogue drawn print from a discreet digital photographic image. It was seen and recorded at an Arts Centre when I noticed a young woman with her head on a table concentrating on her phone. It was not a usual position to take up in a daytime situation. It felt as if the young woman was in her own world. The window light illuminated her concentration. I was drawn to it as it captured something distinct and had potential to be experimented through drawing and printmaking to make a portrait that for me, reflected what I had perceived of her presence.

Through a series of queries to people who manage and work at the Arts centre an email from me reached a young woman who had volunteered there at the time. I had requested that my message be sent to her with an offer of a print if she so wished. I was happy to receive a reply from 'Nav' who was surprised to have got my message:

Nav: "This is insane and so random!! It's beautiful. Please say more."

jT: 'I'm glad you like it. It is a bit random, but I saw you concentrating on your phone in the MAC window light and thought you would make a good portrait. If you would like to see, and have, an original I'd be happy to get you one.'

Nav: "Super cool! I'd love one. It's so crazy to see that when you're in your own world like that, you can inspire someone to want to create!"

On receiving this positive response I was happy that we had connected and that Nav had seen that something valuable had come about through my making her portrait. I hope that anyone who I make a portrait of will enjoy it, but to be able to locate the subject that I did not know, and hear she more than enjoyed it, was heart warming. It filled me with anticipation and some trepidation about how she would see the reality of the large print on quality paper, colour and the marks that I have made to reflect her in that moment.

Portrait 11 - Nav

We arranged to meet in a cafe in late December – ‘I could be recognised by the roll of paper under my arm’. In the cafe I looked around for a blond haired woman, but met the eyes of a dark haired person who indicated she was expecting to meet me. We smiled in recognition and sat down and put the rolled prints on the table between us.

This is a heightened meeting for both of us. Nav meeting the anonymous artist who has made her portrait and offered to meet and share. The artist meeting the subject he had selected, photographed and spent many hours creating a portrait of but not knowing her and now in anticipation of how she would respond. We talked at first about when I had seen her and what had inspired me to make her portrait. I explained how I had noticed her, head laid down intent on the phone and how I had interpreted it when making a dark background for the light on her self to illuminate her concentration.

Nav explained that this moment meant: ‘more than I could imagine’ as I was considering big decisions about my immediate future, but “Lets look. I’m excited.”

I unrolled the print in full view of the cafe. Nav was ‘really chuffed’ with the portrait and the yellow, subtle light gold and dark indigo brown colours. But she explained how it captured a moment of decision for her that I was unaware of until now. At that moment she was deciding whether to stay at home in the UK, or leave her family and travel with her partner to Australia.

As we continued talking over her portrait laid in front us, the waitress commented to Nav on how good it must be to have a portrait made of her. Nav agreed. I told Nav it was the first print from a small edition and that I would number and sign it. Could I title it ‘Nav.’? “Yes of course”.



Original smartphone photograph. 2017

Portrait 11 - Nav

It has been so worthwhile seeking out Nav, until now the anonymous subject of this portrait, which I and others who have seen it, respond to positively. Meeting her face to face and hearing that it means more to her than I could have imagined makes the work all the more meaningful. The circle from discreet photography to drawn and printed artwork gave me succour for this new chapter of art making.

As I leave, we hug and I promise to invite Nav to any exhibition of her portrait and wishing her much good luck for the future.

I dropped Nav a message later:

'So fabulous to meet you and share your portrait. I am so chuffed you are chuffed.'

Later that night Nav replied:

"It was so amazing to meet you Jonnie. Such a beautiful experience and one of life's little unexplainable magical moments, having that snippet of my life captured. I'm so grateful."



Nav accepting her portrait. Cafephillia, Birmingham, 2017



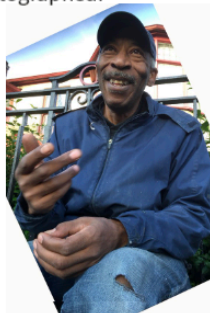
Nav. Duotone. Silkscreen. 84.1 x 118.9. 2017

Hermon Green

Hermon Gree, Erokaworld - exclusive and unique clocks and tables

I draw portraits in my studio and surround myself with finished silkscreen prints and works in progress. Hermon, a fellow studio maker, dropped by and commented positively about the portraits on the walls. We talked about how I make them from smart phone photos made discreetly to capture the essence of the subject when in regular conversation rather than in 'presentation mode' when aware of being photographed.

Hermon got the reasoning and could see it in the resultant prints. He dropped in that he 'would understand if I wanted to portray him!' I noted his interest and could envisage an engaging portrait.



Hermon. One colour Silkscreen. 84.1 x 118.9. 2018

Portrait 12 - Hermon

It took 3 months and a few chats/meetings to achieve a starting image that reflected Hermon's character to begin a drawing. Another 6 months and the printed portrait using a 'light out of dark' drawing method was completed. The ground was built up with charcoal on mark resist film. The edges were left with sweeps of the charcoal stick and the edges of the photocopy beneath were left intact to provide a frame within a frame. The highlights were 'rubbed out' with an eraser and the shadows deepened with charcoal and graphite. Thin lines scratched out of the graphite and charcoal with a scalpel provide detail in contrast to the gestural marks composing the face and grounding. There is a tactile materiality to his portrait born out of the range of drawing techniques and attitudes the marks that convey my perceived values of his personality.

The print was shared with Hermon who was moved to see his image:

"These cheeks are the cheeks I see in the mirror when I wash my face in the morning. This is a good times picture". Hermon has the first print in the edition of 4. It hangs in his home where he and his partner say the portrait changes: "Recently he looks happier."

Print No 2 was hung in the ORT Gallery as a part of the Schwarmerei show. Hermon popped into the studio one morning and presented me with a beautiful crafted wooden clock in the shape of a map of Scotland as a token of his gratitude for his portrait.



Hermon receives his portrait in his workshop

Hamza

On a cold February afternoon artist Mohammed Ali and I were discussing with Afzal the carpenter, the external boards being erected on the Moseley School of Art facade, when an imposing gentleman approached and said hi to 'Ali'. Ali introduced 'Hamza' to Afzal and myself and he asked what is going on in the building as it had reopened.

He had spent time in education classes in the building many years ago when it was a centre for the Moseley Muslim Community Association. During the conversation I made a smart phone photograph of Hamza as he stood before us in his warm, thick patterned duffle coat.



'Jacket Man'. One colour Silkscreen. 84.1 x 118.9. 2019

Portrait 13 - Hamza

On reviewing the photograph I was impressed as it reflected the imposing and serious impression Hamza had made on me. Later, I shared it with Mohammed during a discussion about the hadiths of Islam concerning the making of images of the human form and portraits. Hadiths are records of the traditions or sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, revered and received as a major source of religious law and moral guidance, second only to the authority of the Qur'ān. A number of the hadiths discourage the drawing of the human form by humans as it can be interpreted as a form of idolatry and imitation of the creation of Allah.

There are a range of interpretations and nuances to the current debate ranging from the wholehearted support for no figuration through to acceptance of representation in the contemporary world.

Some clarifications suggest that excluding the eyes from drawn portraits may be acceptable as the viewer of the image will not be able to see into the soul of the subject. In the photograph I had made of Hamza his glasses reflected the sunlight as he looked upwards and my camera angle was low. These factors coalesced to obscure his eyes and in making the drawing I enhanced the reflection and made little detail of the eyes. This was to show respect for Islam while retaining an image reflecting Hamza's presence.

Mohamed was impressed by the stature of Hamza in the portrait I had made, and rang a mutual friend and convert to Islam to ask if he thought Hamza would be interested (or offended) by the proposition to make a portrait of him:

"I think he will be interested, but you will have to ask him."

The next day Al Jazeera television were in the studio to record an interview with Mohammed. He told them not to film Hamza's image as we had not shared his portrait with him. This encouraged me to contact him to invite him in to see the result. He agreed to drop by.

Portrait 13 - Hamza

Later Hamza came calmly into the studio, surveyed the scene and the range of works. His eyes came to his portrait. A big smile reached across his face followed by a loud laugh of appreciation.

"I really like this. It looks like me. I like the way you have drawn my jacket. I've had it years and people want it from me. It's not just my face, it's the jacket and the way I stand. The only thing is the angle. My nostrils are a bit too exaggerated. I like how you have done my beard with the different shades."

"You could have shown more of the eyes. I don't hold with not seeing the eyes. I know some people do. But I think each has to do as they think best and let Allah be our judge. I'm fine with what you have done. Taking the photograph secretly and making the drawing, but I tell you there are some brothers that would not be OK with it."



Hamza checking out his portrait.
Birmingham, 2019



Hamza smart phone photographing
his portrait that began as a smart
phone photograph

jT: 'If you felt it wasn't good, or inappropriate I would destroy it with all the images leading up to the final portrait. I was definitely open to you feeling like that and would have stopped the process immediately. But as you like it, I want to give it to you. I've signed and stamped it, but what should we title it? Hamza?'

Hamza: "Nah. Dunno." What about jacket man? "That's good, yeah jacket man." Hamza reflected: "If you had asked me what I would have preferred I would have asked to have a side view."

jT: 'Because you would have wanted to be portrayed in a thinking, thoughtful manner?'

Hamza: "Yes that's right. Thoughtful."



Post Portrait sharing message.
Photos Mohammed Ali



Mars black and red ink swatches

Barbara Walker MBE RA

I had seen Barbara drawing John Akomfra in the Round Room of Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. She was fully focussed on making the drawing which I wanted to capture in a photograph and ultimately in drawing and print. Following developing the portrait we met at 'A Slice through the World: Contemporary Artists' Drawings' at the Oxford Modern Art Gallery where she was exhibiting three 'embossed drawings'. While we were talking in the gallery a photographer approached to take her picture and she recoiled - 'No'.

This emphatic response made me even more worried about how she may respond to my portrait of her which I was intending to inform her of if the opportunity arose. I did tell her and invited her to the School of Art to see and receive the first edition, should she approve.

With some trepidation I welcomed Barbara to the School where she also studied and upstairs to see her portrait in its material reality.



'Babs'. One colour Silkscreen. 84.1 x 118.9. 2020

Portrait 14 - Barbara walker

"I like it', no I really do. Its so big. I love the marks and attention to the hair, hands, my earring. It also shows respect for me as an artist."

I said I wanted to focus on hair head, eyes and hands and the drawing concentration between eye, pencil in hand to her sketchbook. What shall we name it? Barbara, draws?

"My close friends call me 'Babs' so I'd like that please. I happily numbered, signed, stamped and titled the portrait 'Babs' and presented it to her."

Barbara: *"I will get it properly framed. My daughter will be after it."*

We made a cardboard folder with a string handle for Barbara to carry it flat. Later Barbara messaged me her approval.

"Dear Jonnie

Thank you for the great artwork. Very happy and honoured to accept your gift!

p.s I saw your work at Ort Gallery opening! Great work too!"



Barbara reviews her portrait



'Babs' portrait exhibited at the RBSA gallery

I replied:

'Great to see you. I'm so glad you like your portrait. It means a lot to me that you do and want to keep and frame it.

The marks round the edge are the result of rubbing carbon dust into the drawing film and the attached Instagram is from when I bought the dust and you replied 'WOW'. Maybe I remembered that when I was drawing your portrait.

I hope your daughter(s) enjoy it with you and see their mother's total focus on her art making.'



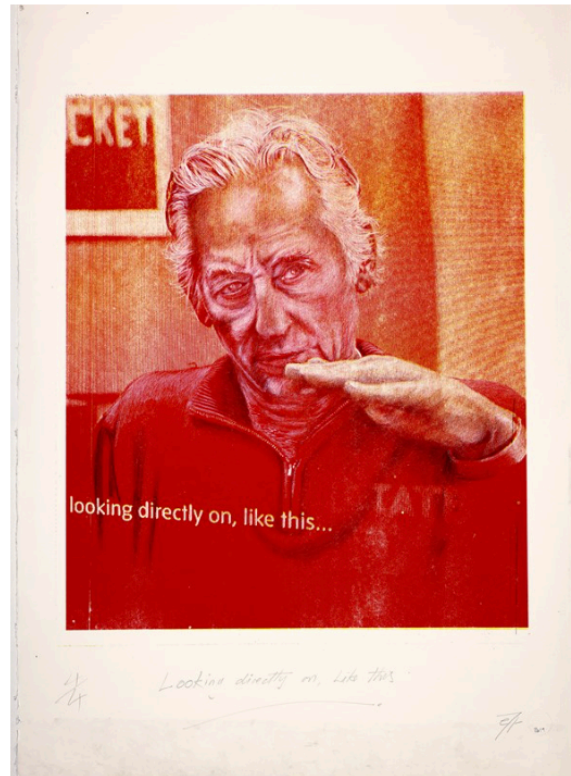
Liked by ukprintmakers, w_john_hewitt and 10 others
Jonnie_turpie This should be the beginning of a new print/drawing. Of course taken with willowfilter @ukprintmakers @artprintjournal #printmakerscouncil @momentsatmargaretstreet @instagramfilter b.cogle Wow!

Barbara's response to JT instagram



Orange, yellow and red ink swatches

Ed Ruscha



Ed Ruscha. Looking directly on, like this.
Four colour Silkscreen. 84.1 x 118.9. 2020

Portrait 15 - Ed Ruscha

This case study is of the making of a portrait of the American West Coast artist Ed Ruscha, pronounced ed-werd-rew-shay as defined by the artist in an early business card. I do not know the subject. However I have avidly followed his work since seeing his artist book 'Sunset Strip', over 40 years ago. Through his defining 'Standard' Garage silkscreen prints to the recent rusty signs prints: 'Dead End' exhibited as part of the British Museum show:

The American Dream from Pop to the Present.

Recently I was warmly reminded of the Ruscha body of work at his Tate Modern Artist Room exhibit. Outside the room a flat screen displayed a short subtitled video interview. I was motivated to photograph scenes of the contemporary Ruscha communicating. On review, one frame stood out as emblematic of Ruscha's attitude to his work and its making: his hand held horizontally in front of his face as he looked intently across it as the subtitles read: 'Looking Directly On, Like This.' The image and subtitle, with its clearly defined video raster pattern seemed to encapsulate what has driven the artist from the analogue world of 60s America to the digital environment of the twenty first Century.

The source image is a smart phone photograph, but ultimately it is a video screen grab from a Tate video production that, presumably, a release form was signed for by Ruscha. I made a request for a license to use the image from the publisher, TATE, for which a sum was paid. There followed a 3 month period of experimentation to arrive at a portrait with a unique integration of digital and drawn silkscreen techniques reflective of the artist.

Ed Ruscha is based in LA. Through a number of introductions an email including a jpg of the print reached his studio director. She printed it out for him and suggested I might send an edition of the print if I so wished direct to the artist. I couriered a print with a personal letter of explanation of my intentions in making his portrait.

An article on the making of the portrait: 'Drawing Ed Ruscha' was published in Drawing: Research, Theory, Practice. Vol 5 Number 2. Dec 2020, p. 291 - 303
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1386/drtpr_00038_1

Portrait 15 - Ed Ruscha

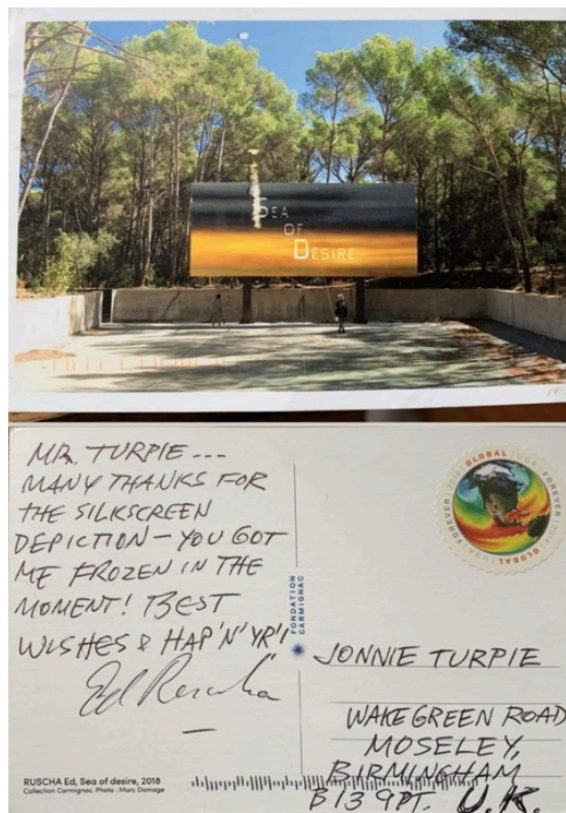
After a number of weeks I enquired of the studio director if the portrait had arrived.

"It has and actually Ed has sent you a post card. He was appreciative."

A card arrived: his 2018 Sea of Desire installation at the Fondation Carmignac in the south of France. It was USA stamped with a hand written message in Ruscha style capital letters:

'YOU GOT ME FROZEN IN THE MOMENT!'

Signed off with hand written signature. This is a most humbling and meaningful approval for an artist in awe of a renowned artist.



Ed Ruscha Thank you post card

**The Drawn Serigraph:
An investigation through portraiture**



A practice based Doctoral Research Project by Edward (Jonnie) Turpie, 2017 - 2024. Carried out at The School of Art, Birmingham City University.

Catalogue presented to accompany thesis and exhibition submission.

An ethical review statement has been approved by the University's Arts, Design and Media Faculty including the retrospective consent form.

