

Recent developments in portraiture: what does it mean to bring a portrait to life?

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Abstract

I give a brief history of my art practice, which explores past, present and possible future techniques to, in some sense, bring portraits 'to life'. I set out and discuss the work of artists who have influenced my thinking and practice and others who are simply working along related lines. In particular I examine developments in 'augmented reality' and give an account of the current state of this field both in general and as utilised by contemporary artists.

I explain how I learnt this new technology and describe how I used it to enhance my art/photography practice in order to produce more interesting and novel kinds of portraiture with it. I discuss the decision-making behind the making and curating of the final pieces of artwork for my MA exhibition.

To conclude I discuss both the viewer's engagement with my work and to what extent the work realised my vision and intentions for it. By using new technologies am I limiting access to a privileged audience only? Did I find a meaningful and aesthetically satisfying solution to 'bringing a portrait to life'?

Introduction

Recent developments in portraiture: what does it mean to bring a portrait to life?

I have always been interested in trying various media for my portraits; this led me to think about what it was that brings certain portraits to life? I needed to know if augmented reality was a tool/technique that would add life to my portraits? To answer this question I researched how other artists have tackled portraiture, the materials they have used and their reasoning behind their decisions. I also looked at how artists were using augmented reality in their work.

To develop my research I used qualitative research using the following methodologies. I took photographs, visited galleries and exhibitions, used existing data such as television programs and online videos, read books, journals and online text. The criteria I used to select material was that it must link to my thesis title 'what does it mean to bring a portrait to life'. I used various technologies and software to conduct lots of practical experiments to form the research for my final 3 artworks, those consisted of, watching online videos about augmented and virtual reality, downloading and playing with various apps, getting to grips with using online studio applications. I did lots of different digital photo-shoots using studio lighting, sound, video and various scenarios and models; I then compiled it together using Adobe Premier Pro, Photoshop, Audacity, QuickTime Pro and then into the augmented reality app. I ran further tests to gauge user experience by selecting a range of people aged from 13 -70, male and female, it was very important to me that the viewer had an experience of the portrait coming to life.

This is a narrative account of my artistic practice in relation to portraiture and augmented reality. I start with an historical account leading into the final account of the three images for the exhibition.

Chapter One

I explore what a portrait is, what it does, tell, show, remind, convince? I look into the work of Lewis Hine, Catherine Opie, Martin Parr and Thomas Ruff and Thomas Struth to research what a portrait means to them. I also give an insight into my first steps into portraiture.

Chapter Two

I look into Contemporary portraiture, firstly by looking back at my previously exhibited work and then researching into the works of other artists. These artists are Sophie Calle, Damien Hirst, Piero Manzoni, Marc Quinn, Steve McQueen, Jason Salavon, Andy Warhol and Gillian Wearing. I discuss my experience as a school photographer and how Steve McQueen has brought this tradition into the contemporary art world.

Chapter Three

I talk about the Future and what developments are happening now, in particular augmented reality. I look at how artists such as Sander Veenhof, Orlan and Martin Strutz are using this technology to produce exciting new art. I also share my experience of virtual reality after a visit to the 'Enter Through the Headset 2' exhibition at the Gazelli Art House.

Chapter Four

I focus on my exhibition, I start with my initial ideas and plans, I explain the technical terms of the app I chose to use, I then walk you through the practical experiments that I carried out and my train of thought throughout the process leading to my final 3 images ready for exhibition. After a comparison of my images I explain the plan for the exhibition space and how the viewers would receive my images.

Ending with my conclusion ‘what does it mean to bring a portrait to life’

During the time of making my art and writing this thesis, the HP Reveal app I chose to use has become obsolete. I have redirected all of my artwork to another app called Artivive, below are the instructions of how to use it to view my work. You will find the Artivive icon on pages 46, 47, 49, 50 & 51.


-  1. **Install** the Artivive app
-  2. **Find** images marked with the Artivive icon
-  3. **View** the image through your smartphone

Figure 1. *Artivive Template (2017)*

Chapter One

What is a portrait?

A portrait is a representation of a particular person.

A self-portrait is a portrait of the artist by the artist (Tate, 2019)

Noun

1. A likeness of a person, especially of the face, as a painting,

drawing, or photograph: *a gallery of family portraits.*

2. A verbal picture or description, usually of a person:

a biography that provides a fascinating portrait of an 18th-century rogue.

(Dictionary, 2019)

What compels us to keep creating portraits? Is it fear of loneliness, a desire to connect with all humans or maybe a need to understand ourselves as humans on this planet?

Does the portrait need to be a resemblance for us to be able to connect with it? Is it necessary to look into the eyes of the subject for it to become ‘alive’? John Berger said, “When you are trying to make a portrait of somebody you know well, you have to forget and forget until what you see astonishes you. Indeed, at the heart of any portrait, which is, alive, there is registered an absolute surprise surrounded by close intimacy. I’ll certainly be misunderstood but I’ll take the risk and say: to make a portrait is like fucking.” (Dyer, 2013)

Or is it about showcasing an artist’s skill with self-portraits being a popular choice as ‘the self’ is always available and at no financial cost? Maybe, however, the answer is much simpler, as Warhol is quoted as saying: “I paint pictures of myself to remind myself that I’m still around.” (The Andy Warhol Museum, 2019)

He also said, “If you want to know about Andy Warhol, then just look at the surface of my pictures, and there I am” (Warhol, 1967)

What does a portrait do: tell, show, remind, convince?

A portrait can be used to change public opinion, to show life beyond one’s own demographic; it can convince us of wealth, health and happiness or of poverty, cruelty and sadness. It can remind us of where we have come from and what we have achieved. It can tell a story, cover up a story or invent a new story.



Figure 2. Lewis Hine *Italian family in the baggage room, Ellis Island (1905)*

Lewis Hine, an ‘American photographer who used his art to bring social ills to public attention’ (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2019)

Hine took portraits of immigrants arriving at Ellis Island. He wanted these portraits to convey a sense of empathy so the viewer would have ‘the same regard for contemporary immigrants as they have for pilgrims who landed at Plymouth Rock.’ (The Guardian, 2019) He also took portraits of young children working at manual labour, not for the benefit of themselves but for the profits of others. His photographs

helped highlight their plight and led to the passage of the Fair Labour Standards Act in 1938.



Figure 3. Lewis Hine *In a Children's Home, Pittsburgh, Pa, (1909)*
Gelatin Silver Print

Catherine Opie was moved by how Hine's work helped to change the law on child labour and this led her to becoming a social documentary photographer. Opie uses portrait paintings to influence her portrait photography. She takes the form and the style from old master paintings. As a viewer of these portrait paintings, Opie thinks about how the portrait relates to her and how it makes her feel and considers these things when constructing her own portraits. She uses objects and placements such as hands being strategically placed or holding something to suggest a story within her images. She also understands that photography can be a marker in a person's life. For example she draws inspiration from the painting *Lady with an Ermine* by Leonardo da Vinci in the pose of her son, marking his development from a boy to a man.

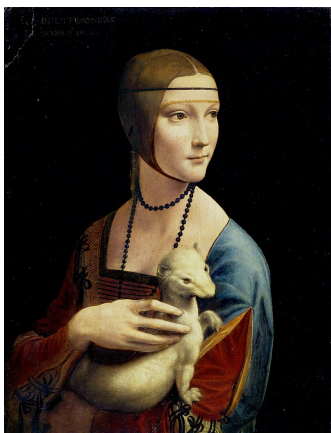


Figure 4. Leonardo Da Vinci,
Lady with an Ermine (1483)
[oil on board] 40x55cm



Figure 5. Catherine Opie,
Oliver & Mrs. Nibbles (2012)
Pigment print 33 x 25 inches

She believes the portrait should be about “the humanistic experience - the viewer has expectations as they gaze upon a portrait.” She wants the viewer to walk away with a deeper understanding of what it is to be human. (Tate, 2019)

Opie has taken recent portrait photographs of David Hockney, Anish Kapoor and Gillian Wearing among others, using her research into the old master portrait paintings to produce very strong images. Fellow artists are set against a black backdrop with dramatic lighting on them, some looking directly at the camera and some away but all almost expressionless, fixed in thought and not engaging with the camera or the viewer. Opie explains, “What is it to stare and be stared at? I am trying to approach that question in this body of work, I think I’ve always been observing people, I’m always told I’m staring way too much!” (Jansen, 2019)

Because of her interest in observing people, Opie created work, as did Michael Landy. In 2008 he set about drawing the people around him, doing this for 7 days a week and for 5 months. Presenter Kirsty Walk said that after being drawn by Landy and seeing the portraits of all the other people he had drawn, ‘I wanted to know about the people, what had caused the lines in their faces, I wanted to know more about

them.’ (Tate, 2019) I think this is also part of the humanistic experience of which Opie talked.

Like Opie and the work by Landy my focus has always been on the observation of people. I have drawn, photographed, screen-printed, mono printed, lino printed, painted using oil and egg tempera and digitally enhanced my portraits. I’m constantly looking for different ideas to capture the personality of my subjects and new and interesting ways to bring a portrait ‘alive’.

My first successful drawings were of family and friends; likewise my photographs. Anyone who has used a film camera will be impressed that I never once chopped any heads off even at the young age of 10 years old, unlike the rest of my family!

I learned to use my camera creatively and I loved catching people unawares. The traditional posed family photo by the Christmas tree didn’t excite me - I preferred to photograph the family after the Christmas dinner, very full and a little worse for wear and when they weren’t expecting it of course.



Figure 6. Tamsin Bartlett *Mum*, (1982)



Figure 7. Martin Parr *New Brighton*, (1983-85)

While I was getting to grips with my new camera and capturing private family moments as they were, without pretence or dressing up, Martin Parr was taking similar natural photographs of real life, in the holiday destination of New Brighton. The photos depicted working class families taking their holidays on a beach that was dirty and full of rubbish and where babies were drinking cans of fizzy drinks surrounded by chip papers. He was accused of mocking the working class, but he wanted to show Britain as it was, to prove that not all of Britain was on the up as Margaret Thatcher was making out. “My parents are bird watchers so, growing up, I didn’t go to trashy seaside resorts,” reveals Parr, “we went more to look at Waders and Goldfinches. But then my wife got a job in Liverpool, and we bought a house about a mile and a half away from New Brighton. When I discovered it, I got very excited; I was attracted to its litter and energy and I knew then that I would do a project about it.” (AnOther, 2019)

When I wasn’t using the camera I was drawing, always portraiture. During my time at Art College in the 80’s I found new ways to explore this. I developed my drawings

into prints using screen-printing and linocuts; I also painted portraits onto silk. I was always using the camera as a tool for my non-photographic activities as well as for creating photographs intended themselves as art. For me the magic happened in the darkroom, watching the image slowly appear while in the developing tray. It felt like it was coming alive. I would spend hours in the darkroom perfecting this process. On leaving college I turned my grandfather's outbuilding into my own darkroom and it was here that I spent most of my free time after work and at weekends.



Figure 8 & 9. Tamsin Bartlett *Private Collection*, (1983-90) 7" Vinyl picture discs

I worked in print and graphic design for 10 years; I would create the artwork to go on vinyl records and CDs for major record labels, such as MCA and Polydor. This wasn't as creative as it sounds - I remember Andrew Lloyd Webber calling up and asking if we were "all fucking idiots" and to "move the text half a millimetre to the left" and resend it to him. I did resend it but I didn't move the text, as it was perfectly central; he was happy with it the second time!

I loved that job and only left it to start a family. I had been looking forward to getting the camera out for all those cute baby shots, but what I hadn't realised was that there would be little time for creativity while the children were young. I had to be content

with only the traditional family snapshots. I took a part-time job in a Tesco photography lab to earn some extra money while keeping a toe in the creative industry. Ten years later and once my children were old enough I returned to education to bring my skills up to date.



Figure 10. Tamsin Bartlett *I Am The One*, (2013) 20w x 30h x 1.7d

On my undergraduate course I wished to produce a contemporary icon painting so I asked my fellow students to name their most iconic figure. Barack Obama was the most popular choice, being a popular president as well as being America's first black president. I prepared a block of wood by using the traditional materials for an icon painting, rabbit-skin glue, whiting to make the gesso and tarlatan. Once the tarlatan had adhered to the wood and 12 layers of gesso had been applied, the block was ready. I drew a Byzantine style portrait of Obama onto the block, then using a gilder's bole and gold leaf I created his halo. Next I made the emulsion for my paint - for this I used the yolk of an egg (using only the centre and throwing away the skin of the yolk) combined with cider vinegar. I then mixed the emulsion with pigment to create

the paint. The paint was applied to the block using the ‘little lake’ method; it was pooled onto the block and then pushed around rather than brushed on. I started with the shadows and finished with the highlights to create the painting.

Where I was trying to add personality into my portraits Thomas Ruff was trying to achieve the total opposite in his large format passport style portraits. “At the same time as offering great detail in the sitters’ faces, right down to the hair follicles and the pores in their skin, the works’ blank expressions and lack of visual triggers such as gesture, confound our expectations of discovering a person’s character through their appearance.” (Cotton, 2009)



Figure 11. Thomas Ruff *Portrait A. Vollmann*, (1998) C Print 210 x 165 cm 1998
225x300

These photographs were part of the deadpan aesthetic that became popular in the 1990’s, (Fried, 2009) involving trying to remove any influences from the photographer to the sitter leaving only the reactions from the sitter indicating his or her feelings of being photographed for the viewer to read removing the ‘Aura’ that

Benjamin speaks of. (Benjamin, 2008) Another photographer working in this way was Thomas Struth, for his portraits he only took photographs family friends and people he likes, he takes his time to plan these portraits but they are not staged. He shows the family the area in which they need to be to be seen by the camera and then leaves them to decide where they stand and how they pose themselves. “There is ... a difference in making a portrait with a large negative-format, with a focusing-screen, where the photographer stands next to and not behind the camera. The portrayed don't fall into the illusion that they are looking at the photographer. The individuals being photographed look into the lens and know exactly what it means to be photographed: that in this particular moment they project a mirror image, without actually seeing themselves.” (Fried, 2009)



Figure 12. Thomas Struth *The Consolandi Family I*, (1996)

C Print 170 x 206 x 2cm

Chapter Two

Contemporary portraiture

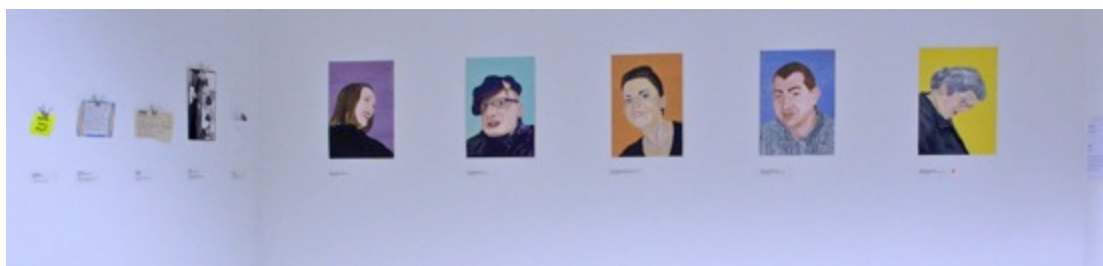


Figure 13. Tamsin Bartlett *Second Year Undergraduate Exhibition*, (2013)



Figure 14 - 15. Tamsin Bartlett *Second Year Undergraduate Exhibition*, (2013)
Post It Note, Postcard, Cheque, Ring

In my first undergraduate public exhibition I concentrated on portraiture with a series of oil paintings of people that were in my life at that time. I also included a self-portrait. My self-portrait was not an oil painting as the others were but was composed of objects I had collected over the years that had special meaning to me, such as a ring given to me by a classmate aged 5 years old, a pretend cheque for a million pounds presented to me by an old boyfriend, a poem written and decorated by a regular customer of mine when I was working as a cashier in Tesco (he was 89 years old), a photograph of me aged 17 at art college which I had developed myself in the college darkroom and then, more recently, my children's teeth. This was the first time I had thought about a portrait being anything other than a picture, photo, drawing or painting of someone's face alone.

Artist Sophie Calle took a job as a chambermaid and photographed personal items of the people staying in the hotel, trying to build up a picture of whom these people were.



Figure 16. Sophie Calle *L'Hotel, Chambre 47*, (1981)
2 works on paper, photographs and ink 2140 x 1420mm

“For ‘The Hotel,’ I spent one year to find the hotel, I spent three months going through the text and writing it, I spent three months going through the photographs, and I spent one day deciding it would be this size and this frame . . . it’s the last thought in the process.” (Calle, 2019)

Calle used the evidence she found from personal belongings found in suitcases, the bathroom and the bins. She went through personal belongings such as a wallet and re-photographed photographs she found in there; she also took information from receipts and used this as well as her own evaluations to form a portrait of the person who’s life she had stumbled upon.

Another artist to use other people's belongings in his art was Damien Hirst, he did not go about this in the way Calle had done. Hirst asked his Grandmother to leave a number of items to him on her death, and she did as he requested.



Figure 17. Damien Hirst *Medicine Cabinets*, (1989)

“You can only cure people for so long and then they’re going to die anyway. You can’t arrest decay but these medicine cabinets suggest you can.” (Hirst, 1993)

Hirst created these medicine cabinets using his grandmother’s empty medicine packets. His quote suggests he may have been thinking about death when producing these artworks, but I see them as a portrait of his grandmother. The message that Hirst is conveying in this work can also be said for the portrait itself. A portrait, be it a photograph, a painting or a conceptual piece of art, will outlive the limitations of the human body therefore keeping the subject ‘alive’.

Unlike Sophie Calle and Damien Hirst, Piero Manzoni and Marc Quinn are more literal and use the body itself to show ‘life’ within their portraits.



Figure 18. Piero Manzoni *Artist's Shit*, (1961)

Tin can, printed paper and excrement 48 x 65 x 65 mm

Piero Manzoni produced 90 cans of artist's excrement, filled balloons with the air from his lungs and printed his fingerprints on eggs before eating them. He saw them as a statement against consumerism but if taken literally, as they were his bodily excretions, it could be argued that these artworks are in fact self-portraits. “Manzoni’s critical and metaphorical reification of the artist’s body, its processes and products, pointed the way towards an understanding of the persona of the artist and the product of the artist’s body as a consumable object.” (Tate, 2019)



Figure 19. Marc Quinn *DNA portrait of Sir John Sulston*, (2001) Medium Stainless steel, polycarbonate agar jelly, bacteria colonies, human DNA 12.7h x 8.5w cm

Marc Quinn created a portrait of Sir John Sulston. This was DNA from Sulston's sperm, exhibited in agar jelly. Commenting on his work, Quinn said "Even though in artistic terms it seems to be abstract, in fact it is the most realistic portrait in the Portrait Gallery.

It carries the actual instructions that led to the creation of John. It is a portrait of his parents, and every ancestor he ever had back to the beginning of life in the Universe." (BBC News, 2019)

Sulston said, "The portrait contains a small fraction of my DNA, though there is ample information to identify me. I like that it makes the invisible visible, and brings the inside out. This is a portrait of our shared inheritance and communality, as well as of one person." (BBC News, 2019)



Figure 20. Marc Quinn *Self*, (2011) Blood, Stainless steel, perspex and refrigeration equipment, 208h x 63w 63d cm

Marc Quinn 'Self' 2006, Marc Quinn was interested in creating a 'living sculpture' and 'freezing time' Self at the National Portrait Gallery. (Quinn, 2010)

The head contains 9½ pints of Marc Quinn's blood. It was first exhibited at David Gobs gallery on the opening night. Charles Saatchi bought it on the second day. The refrigeration unit started to dry out the sculpture by sucking the moisture out and powder was forming all over it. To overcome this it had to be defrosted, cleaned and recast every weekend. Now the head sits inside a vat of liquid silicon, which can stay liquid even whilst at extremely low temperatures. The problems Quinn had initially with 'Self' have led to the creation of other work, such as the Kate Moss piece 'Beauty' this is a full size cast of her body wearing an Alexander McQueen outfit made from frozen water. Quinn uses the refrigeration unit to suck out the moisture from the sculpture so it slowly disappears while on display until all that is left is a

puddle of water “leaving the work to become a visual metaphor for the transience of fame based only on physical attraction”.’ (Quinn, 2019)



Figure 21. Tamsin Bartlett, *Beer Head*, (2014) Beer, ash, paracetamol and antidepressants.

For my final show on my undergraduate course I was looking into mental health. My intention was to examine the anxieties of life, how we deal with those anxieties and the repercussions from the actions we take to relieve us of our anxieties. I made a cast of my head and from that I created various latex masks, each representing an area of mental health. I then placed these masks back into normal life routines, such as washing, the laundry and the bed to re-photograph them. These photographs were part of my exhibition. That satisfied my idea of putting on a smile to mask your inner feelings; I wanted the masks to show the inner feelings. I needed to show how we use drugs and alcohol to numb our dark thoughts but that it is these very things that will eventually destroy us. “Drinking and depression, Alcohol helps us to forget our problems for a while. It can help us to relax and overcome any shyness. It can make talking easier and more fun, whether in the pub, a club or at a party. If you are depressed and lacking in energy, it can be tempting to use alcohol to help you keep

going and cope with life. The problem is that it is easy to slip into drinking regularly, using it like a medication. The benefits soon wear off, the drinking becomes part of a routine, and you have to keep drinking more to get the same effect. We know there is a connection between depression and alcohol.” (Nursing Times, 2019)

Building upon Quinn’s innovative ideas, I made a frozen head, but not from my own blood but from beer, ash, paracetamol and antidepressants, all the things we turn to when we feel low. Unlike Mark Quinn’s ‘Self’ I wanted my head to melt. I was portraying the idea that taking all these things to help us doesn’t work. Alcohol numbs the brain (hence it being frozen); if you drink enough or take enough drugs or smoke enough cigarettes then there will be nothing left of your soul or your body and you may die. The melting of the head signifies the disappearance of a person.

On finishing my degree I progressed into school photography. This style of photography was the exact opposite of what I was doing previously in terms of it being highly posed. The lighting, backgrounds and camera settings had to be exactly the same for every shot and for every client. There wasn’t any time for capturing the subject unawares: this was posed, the subject would need to sit facing the same spot and ‘smile’, and there was no time for creativity because there were so many photos to take in such a short time. The challenge here was to use my people skills to work with the client, I needed to build a rapport, make them feel relaxed and happy enough to smile and all this had to be achieved within 30 seconds. This style of photography is about creating memories quickly and making money.

Ideally a good commissioned portraiture comes from spending time with your subject and getting to know them - you both need to feel confident and relaxed with each

other, this will then encourage the person's true personality to come out and for the artist or photographer to properly interpret this and to be able to create a great image that you are both happy with. "The profession depends so much upon the relations the photographer establishes with the people he's photographing, that a false relationship, a wrong word or attitude, can ruin everything," Henri Cartier-Bresson has said.

"When the subject is in any way uneasy, the personality goes away where the camera can't reach it. There are no systems, for each case is individual and demands we be unobtrusive, though we must be at close range." (Fried, 2009)

I did however enjoy the control I had in the studio, for example there were no surprises or changes in the lighting. I had full control of my final image. Also, although these photographs are essentially the same style, cost and format, to the customer they are unique - it has for them captured a memory of an event or a moment in time that will not be repeated. I can say from a customer's perspective, how proud I felt being handed the photos from my graduation ceremony, there with all my family supporting me, that moment I can relive every time I look at that image. However, this cannot be said for the school photographs of my own children in which they did not look themselves, they looked awkward and nervous and although my son wore glasses, the school had asked him to take them off for the photograph. I am pleased he didn't. I have kept the proofs of these photographs but I did not buy them. 'With the ability to take unlimited free pictures of our children, why would we spend money on pictures that aren't even very good? Between the awkward smile, goofy photographer-styled hair, neon lights background and unnatural head turn, school pictures are often pretty awful.' (Six Figures Under, 2019)



Figure 22. Tamsin Bartlett, *Year 6*, (2016)

While helping out with the school parent and teacher association I took my son's year group photo and individual portraits for their leavers' yearbook. The children told me that they liked the photographs, this could be because they had known me for 6 years and I them and we had some fun while creating the images.

In America yearbooks have been around for years and they have started to become popular in the UK too. The yearbooks contain all the class and individual portraits of a child's progression throughout their school life. As with Tom Hanks and Brad Pitt below, when a child becomes famous these yearbook photos become of interest to the general public and are then available online for anyone to view.



Figure 23.

Ancestry.com, *Tom Hanks*, (2014)

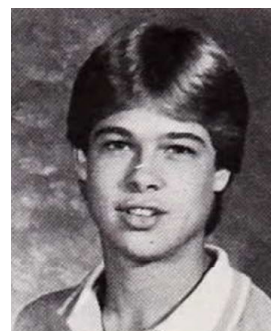


Figure 24.

Ancestry.com, *Brad Pitt*, (2014)

Amelia Jones wrote ‘The photographic self-portrait is like history or the memory that forms it; it never stands still but, rather, takes its meaning from an infinite stream of future engagements wherein new desires and fascinations produce new contours for the subject depicted.’ She goes on to talk about the photograph’s ability to capture a moment ‘The works I examine here insistently enact the photograph’s capacity to mark the death of the subject; in doing so, they paradoxically open this subject to the ‘life’ of memory and interpretive exchange, marking selfhood and otherness in a potentially productively destabilizing way.’ (Jones, 2002)

This is the case with Steve McQueen’s *Queen & Country*, where McQueen produced stamps to commemorate those soldiers who died in the Iraq war. Each stamp has a photograph of a deceased soldier on it, chosen by a member of their family. (Thomas Dane Gallery, 2019)



Figure 25. Steve McQueen, *Queen and Country*, (2007-2009) 260 x 140 x 190 cm.

102 3/8 x 55 1/8 x 74 3/4 in

This artwork marks the deaths of over 130 British soldiers. McQueen was made the official war artist by the Imperial War Museum in 2006; he wanted these stamps to be in circulation for the public to use but the Royal Mail did not. (Telegraph.co.uk, 2019)

For his latest work of art Steve McQueen, Turner prize-winner 1999 and filmmaker is planning to photograph all year 3 pupils across London as class groups, like the photo below of his own year 3 class group. He is doing this in partnership with the Tate, Artangel and A New Direction and in collaboration with BBC London and Into Film. Artangel have been working for over 30 years to produce “extraordinary art in unexpected places.” (Artangel, 2019)

“A New Direction is a London based non-profit generating opportunities for children and young people to unlock their creativity.” (A New Direction, 2019)



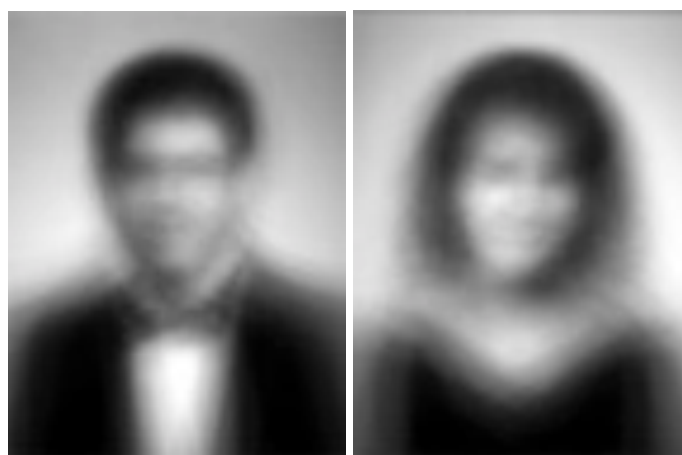
Figure 26. Steve McQueen, *Steve McQueen's Year 3 Class at Little Ealing Primary School*, (1977)

“There’s an urgency to reflect on who we are and our future [...] to have a visual reflection on the people who make this city work. I think it’s important and in

some ways urgent.”

Steve McQueen (Tate, 2019)

School photo - the camera - the person - the scene - the performance - the act



The class of 1988 (left panel) The class of 1988 (right panel)



The class of 1967 (left panel) The class of 1967 (right panel)

Figure 27. Jason Salavon, *The Class of 1988 & The Class of 1967*, (1998) Silver gelatin prints. Two sizes: 58.5" x 44" & 22.5" x 17" Ed. 4 + 2 APs (lg size).

Ed. 8 + 2 APs (sm size)

Jason Salavon created these images by using all of the portraits from his and his mother's year group photographs, he used digital software that separated out each pixel and replaced it in order of colour. "From a series begun in 1997, these works

apply a custom averaging process to graduating yearbook photos from my family history. The Class of 1988 is an amalgamation of all of the young men and women in my high school graduating class. The Class of 1967 is composed of all the members from my mom's graduating class from the same hometown of Fort Worth, Texas.”(Salavon, 1997-2019)



Figure 28. Andy Warhol, *Self-Portrait*, (1963)

In the early 1960's Andy Warhol was using photo booth images of his friends and family to inform his screen prints, these were of similar style to those yearbook portraits and individual school portraits but without the interaction from the photographer/artist. The subject was often less self-conscious and would pose or be 'silly' and playful, especially if a group of friends had squeezed into the photo booth together. The booth would be curtained off. This gave the subjects a sense of privacy, allowing them to relax and be themselves, which in turn gave a feeling of 'Life' to those images.

Gillian Wearing '60 minutes of silence'



Figure 29. Gillian Wearing, *60 Minutes Silence*, (1996)

Gillian Wearing created this image in 1996; she asked 26 volunteer policemen and women to stay still for 60 minutes while she filmed them. The image looks like a standard photograph of any group but as the time moves on, you notice movement and realise this is a film. At the end of the 60 minutes one policeman lets out a loud cry, as standing for so long had proved difficult for him. Gillian won the Turner Prize in 1997 for this work in film and photography. (Arts Council Collection, 2018)

Leslie Garner commented "This video is not a photograph, and the longer I looked the more I saw other figures move; nothing dramatic, just the normal shifts and coughs of people made to hold a silent pose for an hour. It's mesmerizing. There is a great sense of tension from all that suppressed energy, and the longer you looked the more individuals emerge. Gillian Wearing has made a career from using video to bring out humanity and individuality and this seemingly simple piece is compellingly

effective.” (Button, 2004) Gillian Wearing herself commented, “A great deal of my work is about questioning handed down truths.... I’m always trying to find ways of discovering things about people, and in the process discover more about myself.”

(Button, 2004)

In my work I am trying to incorporate two things into one, the moving image and the still image. I firstly use the technique of layering up more than one image and slightly moving each layer to create the illusion of motion into the image. I then take my film and place it into the augmented reality app. Gillian Wearing has also incorporated the moving and the still image without the need for augmented reality - she has done this by creating a film which is alluding to being a photograph.

Chapter Three

The future - what developments are happening now?

The portrait is no longer just painted or drawn as a physical object, which is exhibited in galleries but can now be produced instantly and shared with hundreds of people digitally with the use of social media apps such as Instagram and Snapchat. These apps allow you to upload photographs, edit them and add filters before sharing them with your family, friends and followers.

While working as a school photographer I had been exposed to a relatively new technology, Augmented Reality, which really excited me and I knew instantly that I wished to use this technology as a medium in my art practice.

‘The idea of bringing art to life should be understood beyond its literal sense.

Bringing art to life means giving the appropriate movement and interaction to artwork, and meanwhile, giving the opportunity to the observer to become part of it. This challenges the traditional dynamics of an exhibition. It breaks the silence of the art and brings it to life so it can explain itself, or transform.’ (Artive, 2019)

Augmented reality is quickly becoming one of the hottest trends in the marketing and advertising industries, recognised as an innovative and creative way of connecting with customers and increasing engagement. The technology has significantly grown in popularity over the last few years, and is expected to be worth over \$61 Billion by 2023. With this in mind, AR is a very useful tool to learn.

Jobs that are currently advertising for Augmented Reality skills include: Visualisation Specialist – Artist with technical skills; Digital Designer; Graphic Designer; Advertising; Marketing; 3D Artist; Developer and Games Developer.

Goldman Sachs expects the following nine sectors to drive the software market: videogames, live events, video entertainment, healthcare, real estate, retail, education, engineering and defence. The three biggest markets in both 2020 and 2025 will be entertainment, healthcare and engineering. (Sanderink, 2017)

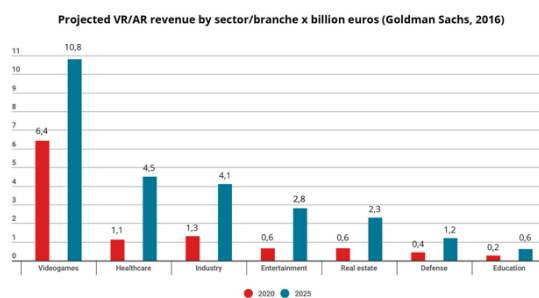


Figure 30. Goldman Sachs, *Graph 3 Worldwide VR/AR software revenue forecast by sector (2016)*.

All of this is great news for industry, commerce and education but it is also exciting for contemporary artists and is starting to create a buzz in the art world. “So long as the augmented reality component remains thoughtful, centred on expanding a work’s experience, then ARt may literally change how we view and experience art. The ultimate goal? Getting people excited about checking out museums, galleries, and their neighbourhood streets. ‘Now that artists are integrating new technologies like AR and VR into their work,’ says Posada, ‘the sky is the limit as to how far we can go as an art community.’”(Big Think, 2019)

Artists integrating Augmented reality and Art

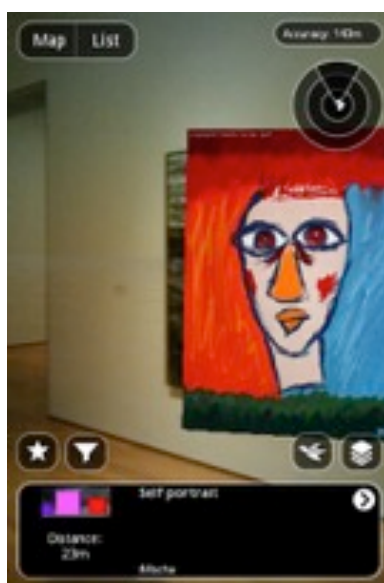


Figure 31. Sander Veenhof, (2010)

A collection of artists formed a group called Manifest.AR. They were all using augmented reality to create art and activist works when augmented reality first became available on smartphones. The core founders of this group were Mark Skwarek, Sander Veenhof, Tamiko Theil, Will Pappenheimer, Christopher Manzione and John Craig Freeman.

As part of the Conflux Festival the group performed an intervention at the Museum of Modern Art in October 2010, which was ground breaking. Mark Skwarek and Sander Veenhof invited artists working with augmented reality to create some art to be displayed in and around the Museum of Modern Art without the knowledge of the museum; by doing this they were challenging the Museum of Modern Art's exclusivity. Virtual artworks from any artist could now mix with the art that had been curated within an official gallery. The artists had augmented reality on every floor of the Museum of Modern Art; the museum was also extended to include a virtual 7th floor.

“Conflux is the annual New York festival for contemporary psychogeography, the investigation of everyday urban life through emerging artistic, technological and social practice. At Conflux, visual and sound artists, writers, urban adventurers and the public gather for four days to explore their urban environment.” (Conflux, 2003)



Figure 32. Orlan, *Masques, Peking Opera*, (2014)

In 2014 French artist Orlan exhibited a series of self-portrait masks, using augmented reality to bring the masks ‘alive’. The series was called Mask of Beijing Opera, Facing Designs and Augmented Reality Self-Hybridizations. A 3d graphics

generated image of the artist jumped out of the masks and performed acrobatics in the style of a Peking opera performance. (Orlan, *Masques, Peking Opera*, (2014)



Figure 33. Martin Strutz, *Jackson Pollock AR*, (2018)

“The Jackson Pollock gallery at MoMA has been virtually taken over by a group of artists who created an AR app to showcase their own works.” (Katz, 2018)

“I’m excited about Augmented Reality because unlike Virtual Reality, which closes the world out, AR allows individuals to be present in the world but hopefully allows an improvement on what’s happening presently.” (Cook, 2018)

Enter Through the Headset 2 exhibition

The Gazelli Art House, London held a virtual reality exhibition in September 2017 called Enter Through The Headset 2. It was the second part of the annual virtual reality experience at the gallery. The artists were Gibson & Martelli, Jocelyn Anquetil, Matteo Zamagni, Iain Nicholls and Rebecca Allen; they were exploring

themes relating to the natural environment while connecting the digital and virtual worlds to our physical space. “The intention of this show is to continue exploring non-traditional mediums in art, helping artists work within this field by creating a sustainable exposure and nurturing the cross over between technology and art – a growing area of interest for the gallery over the past two years,” Mila Askarova, Founding Director of Gazelli Art House.

This was my first experience of virtual reality. I had to wear a headset that went over my eyes stopping me from seeing my current surroundings. Only being able to view a screen within the headset, it was quite disconcerting and it took me a while to relax into it. I was very aware that by moving around in the virtual world I was also moving around in the real world. The virtual world was confusing the senses I needed to be able to move freely in the real world. I didn't trust that I could move forward without bumping into someone else in the gallery space. In reality, that couldn't happen because a cable only long enough to move a certain distance tethered me to the wall. Being able to interact with the virtual world was exciting and it didn't take too long for me to feel fully immersed in the experience. On removal of the headset I became aware of passers-by looking through the large glass windows of the gallery - I had become part of the exhibit, the passers-by had been watching me interacting with the virtual world waving my arms around and stepping cautiously about the gallery space. “Many interactive artworks are designed exclusively for one person at a time, which presents a challenge when showing interactive works in conventional gallery settings. However, works also exist where multiple users actually enhance the works, for the audience cannot only interact with artworks, but with each other too.” (Colson, 2007)

Chapter Four

Exhibition Preparation

My research started on the Internet, where there are various Augmented Reality apps available to use. I decided to start with the app Augment used by the artist Orlan, after various experiments I then discovered the app HP Reveal; I felt this was the best app for my needs because it is very user friendly. The app works by using the camera on your phone or tablet to display the real world; it then overlays images and videos into that real world location. This differs from Virtual Reality, which is immersive; it creates a whole new digital world that the user can interact with and explore.

What is Virtual Reality and what is Augmented Reality?

“Augmented Reality (AR) is a variation of Virtual Environments (VE), or Virtual Reality as it is more commonly called. VE technologies completely immerse a user inside a synthetic environment. While immersed, the user cannot see the real world around him. In contrast, AR allows the user to see the real world, with virtual objects superimposed upon or composited with the real world. Therefore, AR supplements reality, rather than completely replacing it.” (Ronald, 1995)

What is an Aura?

In this text I will be referring to the term ‘aura’ as used by the AR company Hewlett Packard and branded HP Reveal.

HP Reveal uses the term ‘aura’ within its software to describe the part of the artwork that ‘comes to life’. This ‘aura’ is made up of two parts, a trigger image and an overlay.

This usage needs to be distinguished from the use of 'Aura' to describe a quality integral to an artwork (particularly unique works such as paintings or sculptures), which cannot be communicated through mechanical reproduction techniques such as photography. Walter Benjamin used the term 'Aura' in his influential 1936 essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. Benjamin argued that "even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be." He referred to this unique cultural context i.e. "its presence in time and space" as its 'aura'. (Tate, 2019)

What is a Trigger Image?

"Trigger Images are the real world images or objects you want HP Reveal to be able to recognise in order to deliver an AR experience on your mobile device."

(HP Reveal, 2017)

What is an Overlay?

"The second component of an Aura after a Trigger Image you want our technology to recognise is an Overlay: the digital element (e.g. videos, images, or 3D models) launched on your mobile device's screen when HP Reveal views a trigger image."

(HP Reveal, 2017)

To test how to make a successful aura I found old images and film clips from my undergraduate projects and experimented with the HP Reveal app. I used a film I had taken of my brother playing a gig in a local pub; I didn't have a photograph of it so I took a screen shot.

Now I had my image and my film I was able to create my aura: using the HP Reveal software I imported the image, which was to be used as a 'trigger'. I then imported the film, adjusting it to fit the image. My aura was complete, every time the app saw my 'trigger' image the film would play. It worked so I tried another image, this time of my son play boxing. It was a green screen image that I had imported into a stock tunnel video with music, it looked like my son was dancing rather than boxing which I found interesting. I would play with this idea going forward. Again I was happy with the results from a technical point of view; now I wanted to approach it from an artistic angle.

I had been very upset by the news of refugees coming to England on boats, where many lost their lives on the journey. My daughter had a couple of refugees put into her class at school and they told their extremely sad story of losing their family on the way over to England and being separated themselves. Fortunately they had at least found each other again and had been housed locally. I was very conscious that these awful events were something my children, their friends and I would never fully understand, thankfully. I wanted to make a film depicting this somehow. I downloaded images from Google to form a stop motion film of the awful events in Syria and the journey to England. Using Photoshop I cut out a girl from a photo in Syria and placed her into a photo of my back garden. The photo of my garden included our guinea pigs in their run and a basketball net. Placed in this scene it changed the way you looked at the girl, she looked like any happy child in England. In the original photo she was surrounded by debris and it was upsetting. I called my image 'Safe Now'. *Safe Now* is a fairly average image but by using the augmented reality app I was able to communicate a version of her story, as I understood it.

I decided to return to my old film footage and old images and started to play around. After telling a story about the girl from Syria I wanted to tell a story about my own children.



Figure 34. Tamsin Bartlett, *The Kids*, (2014)

I used a studio photo I had taken of them recently and film footage of them each performing their hobbies - my youngest bouncing on a trampoline, my middle child performing gymnastics and my eldest playing football. I played these films alongside one another 'over' the respective child. This was not successful; the films were far too small to make out what was actually going on in them.



Figure 35. Tamsin Bartlett, *Anniversary*, (2016)

Next, along the same vein I had the idea of embedding the life story of a couple into a photograph of them both, this was a lengthy process, trying to edit together various short movies mainly from old cine film and videos converted to digital. Using the video editing software Premier Pro I created two separate films to run side-by-side, one depicting the life of the mother and one of the father, joining into one film for events such as wedding, christenings and holidays.

I set up a photography studio, I used a backdrop with a light behind it pointing down onto the subject's head to create a hair highlight, and I had a side reflector to the left of the subject to bounce back the light into the shadows of the subject. Finally I had a front light to my left and slightly above to light up my subject. I took a series of photographs of the couple against various background colours - white, blue and grey. For me the grey background worked well, it was fresh and modern. It was important to me that the image was of good quality, typical of a portrait photographer shot - not only to use the skills I had learned but because I envisaged the image on the wall in a

home, alongside other family portraits. The surprise was to lie within it, only accessible via technology and only if the owner wanted to share this secret information.

The result was satisfactory as far as use of the technology went but it lacked impact. The films were still hard to see when they were running side-by-side, there being two reasons for this, one that the image of the couple was only 8x6 and the other was that the film was being viewed on a phone.

From this I realised it would be better with one film fitting the whole 'trigger' image, as two or three films running side-by-side didn't work for what I wanted. I also decided that it would be better to use a tablet rather than a phone because of the bigger screen for viewing.

I began concentrating on the image coming to life again, the last one wasn't successful, I thought that if I took the photograph and recorded the film in the same setting then this may have more impact. This time I set up the studio with a white backdrop including the floor and I photographed an accordion player whilst he played. I then filmed him playing.

When I created the aura this time it had the impact I had been after - I had made the first frame of the film to be the same image as the still image, which then came to life when the app on the tablet recognised it. However I had an issue with this aura because it had a black frame around the film. I was getting closer to what I had in my mind but wasn't there yet. Thinking about the still image I decided a photograph wasn't good enough, it needed to be a work of art in its own right and the augmented

reality to be an extra layer. My thoughts were of creating some movement into the still image. I used Photoshop to create layers; it became apparent that during the studio session, the accordion player didn't move his right leg at all. Using his right leg and the stool as grounding, I layered up the image adjusting the transparency of each image until I was happy with the final image.



Figure 36. Tamsin Bartlett, *The Accordion Player*, (2016) acrylic 60x40

It had strangeness to the image; my eyes couldn't quite decide where to focus. The layering had created two expressions within the one face; I kept these at similar transparency, which caused the confusion of focus, which was perfect as it also showed movement within my image. I didn't want a static image. Changing it from colour to black and white created a more dramatic effect as it 'came alive' from the black and white image into the full colour film.

However I still had to find out how to get rid of the black frame around my film. I got around this by using QuickTime instead of Premiere Pro. I have since learned that the reason for the black frame was due to the fact that the film size was different from the art board size in Premiere Pro.

I had this image produced onto acrylic 60x40. I wasn't happy with it when it arrived as half of the accordion player's shoe had been cut off and the image was greyer than I would have liked. I went back into Photoshop and lightened the image, and then I sent it to another company to produce the acrylic. I was happier with the second acrylic, it was brighter and the image had been cropped the way I wanted.



Figure 37. Tamsin Bartlett, *The Bride*, (2017) acrylic 60x40

Image no.2 came from a design viewpoint initially, weddings are big business and I wanted to create something saleable. Concentrating on the bride I began experimenting with images, again I set up a photographic studio and had various

backgrounds and dress changes for the model. Using confetti to help inform the viewer I threw it onto the set and the model also threw some into the air. I chose the studio set up as opposed to other styles of photography to maintain some continuity in the images. Choosing two images, one of the bride looking contemplative and one looking celebratory, I layered these up to create one strong image. Again there was strangeness to this image that for me really worked - she had two expressions on one face and four arms. This brought movement and expression to the image. The confetti gave a sense of celebration and also helped to add detail and depth to the image. When creating an aura, a strong image is required and at first the image of the bride wasn't strong enough - I had to manipulate the confetti in Photoshop to improve the detail. The strong studio lighting I had used had bleached some of the confetti out.



Figure 38. Tamsin Bartlett, *The Dancers*, (2017) acrylic 60x40

Image no.3 needed to complement the accordion player and the bride, so the next logical image needed was dancers as then we would have a bride, music and dancing.

For this image I needed a much bigger studio space and double the amount of studio lighting, so the dancers would have room to move freely. When shooting the film footage it became apparent that I wouldn't be able to use the sound as outside noises were interfering with the music I was playing. This image is slightly different from the other two in that the dual images didn't have quite the same effect; I believe this is because there are two people in this image. Experimenting with these images I discovered the best way to show movement in this image would be simply to rotate each layer slightly, subtly reducing the transparency of each layer but this time the top layer would be the darkest. This created too much movement and caused the image to look chaotic; it needed grounding so I decided to delete two sets of legs from the male dancer and leave him with just the one pair of legs. As he was carrying the female dancer he needed to appear strong and secure and with his feet firmly on the floor and this worked; just as the accordion player's one leg stayed still and the stool acted as grounding in that image. Editing the film footage was a lengthy process; I wanted to include the essence of the dance without it being too long for the viewer. Furthermore as the sound wasn't up to scratch I needed to overlay the music. Editing the music files to fit with the edited dancing was a challenge, which proved time consuming but enjoyable.

Comparisons

What are my images?

Art, photography, storytelling, design, commerce, documented performance art or a mixture of these things?



Figure 39. Tamsin Bartlett, *Banner*, (2017)

My first image of the accordion player is of two images layered up, each image taken moments apart so this creates a little blurriness that suggests movement when you read the two images as one image. There is certainly an element of performance and storytelling in this piece, the accordion player is smiling which implies he is enjoying playing the music; in one of the layers he is looking directly at the viewer, pulling you in, and the second layer has him looking dreamily into the distance, absorbed in his music but if you try to read both faces at once your mind cannot and jumps between the two which can be a little disconcerting. I particularly like that element of the image, it is what separates it from a photograph to a piece of art, for me it also adds to the feeling of movement in anticipation of the start of the film but of course the viewer does not yet know of the film aspect of this image.

As in image one there is an element of both performance and storytelling in this second image too but also one of design and commerce. This image is about selling the idea that to be a bride is a special and exciting thing, the bride is both looking

joyous and contented and the use of confetti helps to sell this dream. The disconcerting part of this image is that the bride has four arms. They were needed, not only to portray movement but also to help convey the emotions of the bride.

Depending on how I were to present this image would determine what it could be used for, it works well as a piece of art presented on acrylic board but if it were made into a poster it could be used commercially. It could also be repeated using another bride then to become a framed photograph on the wall as a memento of her big day.

Again as in both image one and image two this third image includes the performance and storytelling elements but in this image I have tried to capture action with movement. Rotating the image instead of overlaying it has helped to add drama to the movement and has accentuated the frills and movement in the female dancer's skirt. It was important to clearly show the facial features in this image so the viewer could see the concentration and feel the emotion of the dancers.

Master's exhibition (How to apply personal photography experience in Art work)

I now had three strong images that I was happy to exhibit; all that was left to do was to decide on exactly how these would be presented. Would I get the viewers to download the HP Reveal app so they could view my images or would it be best to have iPads preloaded with the app at the show? If so, how would I secure these and how long would the batteries of these iPads last? I began by testing the life of the iPad battery while using the HP Reveal app, and I found out that they could last all day with some use but with more use the battery depleted faster. I decided it would

cause too many problems to ask the viewers to download the app and it might limit accessibility to the privileged few. With this in mind I decided to buy 3 iPads, so each image could be viewed at the same time. As I couldn't be sure of the footfall of the show or the use of the iPads I decided to invest in a good portable charger, as there wasn't a way to leave the iPads plugged in. The next question was one of sound. To avoid each image competing with one another and the other gallery noises I felt wireless headphones would be a good option, this would allow the viewer to fully connect with the images without any distractions.



Figure 40. Tamsin Bartlett, *MA Exhibition*, (2017)

My exhibition consisted of three images, 3 iPads and 3 sets of headphones. The images were spaced equally across my exhibition space, and the headphones and iPads were placed next to each other under each of the images.

Watching the viewers' responses to my art allayed any doubts I had about whether I had managed to achieve what I had set out to do. There were exclamations of 'wow' and 'magic' as the viewer passed the iPad over the images, and they were calling friends over so that they too could experience the 'magic'. Some used their own

mobile phones to film the 'magic' happening, others were dancing along with those in my images and just enjoying the moment. Uses of headphones had enhanced the experience by giving the viewer solitude, to allow them a personal experience within a gallery setting. Just as I had become part of the exhibition in the Gazelli art gallery, these viewers had become participants of my exhibition.

Conclusion

I talk a lot about the 'emotion' of a portrait. It would seem that this emotion comes from the relationship/rapport between artist/photographer and sitter as well as between sitter and viewer or indeed just from the viewer. Maybe it is this connection alone that brings the portrait 'alive' and not a particular medium or style of work.

Is it purely as Walter Benjamin said that the aura (in his usage) comes from the original authentic artwork and withers on reproduction? 'Benjamin granted aura only to photographs that had a long exposure time, during which the subject "grew" into the images, and a relationship developed between the photographer and the sitter. Aura would emanate from the presence or "magical quality," not of the artist but the subject.' (Hoover, 2002)

If this is the case then according to Benjamin my final three images would already have an aura without the need for the augmented reality as I had spent time with my sitters and developed a rapport with them during the hours spent getting the photo shoots how I wanted them. Then, by editing and manipulating them in software on a computer, adding video to them, using an App to view through another

computer/device, have I totally destroyed Benjamin's sense of 'aura' or my idea of 'bringing it alive'? 'A photograph is said to capture and preserve a moment of time; an image created inside a computer resides in no place or time at all. Images, scanned into a computer, then edited, montages, erased, or scrambled, can seem to collapse the normal barriers of past, present and future.' (Rush, 2005)

Saying that, my images were well received by the viewers. Maybe the audience participation was the 'thing' that brought my portraits alive, the augmented reality being like a game to those new to it and accompanied with music and the buzz of the gallery setting could all have added an excitement to the portraits?

On the other hand the individual school portraits would not have an aura as they are created with less than 30 seconds of studio time and a faster shutter speed of 1/125, perhaps this is why some parents - including myself - could not feel that 'magical quality' from the school portraits of our children and therefore did not purchase them.

To conclude, I do not think that there is one definitive recipe for bringing a portrait to life. I find myself agreeing with Benjamin's use of 'aura' but at the same time thinking that the current generation needs more; they need the interaction and use of technology to be able to engage fully with portraiture. As an artist I will continue to strive to bring my portraits alive. I will continue to experiment with new media but while at the same trying to a build rapport with my sitter, to allow their personality to become part of my art. Then, once I have done my bit, it is up to the viewer to reach their own conclusion as to whether my portraits come to life.

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