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Course: BFA Hons

Essay Topic: Reflective Nostalgia

Forward

This research project has been driven by two equally weighted themes. Firstly the status of painting, and how my ambitions of being a painter relate to the discourse around the medium that has been going on since the start of the 1980s, and continues to influence painting today. And secondly the crafting of a painterly 'language of reference' that communicates moments in time, by evoking feelings of nostalgia. I have divided this essay into three sections that group together my research themes. The first section 'Reading, Criticality and the milieu of Education' Looks at the writing of Mark Godfrey, and discusses the role the institutional environment has in shaping our art practice. The second section 'Nostalgia, Modernity and the Role of Trauma', uses Jan Verwoert's essay "*Historic Desire Unbound: On the work of Paulina Olowka*", to link the ideas of Svetlana Boym on the future of Nostalgia and Charles Baudelaire's concept of Modernity with Bracha Ettinger's offerings on the Matrixial. The final section 'Expressionism, The Photo and The status of painting' uses a close reading of Hal Fosters "*The Expressive Fallacy*" to critique my use of the technical ideas of Expressionism - of forming an image through a painterly process - and links back to the ever present concerns on the status of painting.

Reading, Criticality and the milieu of Education

I was asked at my last crit, "where did you learn to paint?" I answered, "I learnt at Elam". The power of the physical or social setting in which you are developing is particularly important to an artist. Mark Godfrey discusses the educational milieu of four painters in both his article "*Statements of Intent*" and The Guggenheim Christopher Wool Symposium. Location, era and institution don't define you but they definitely shape you, an awareness of which is useful in understanding your own and other artists' practices. Starting with an anecdote about artist Jacqueline Humphries' experience

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at the “famously theory-driven Whitney”¹ in the mid-eighties, Godfrey describes how Humphries’ abstract paintings received a ‘silent shrug’ from a visiting professor. The ambivalent response was a determining moment for the artist, which Godfrey points out can be understood with retrospection. “In such a setting – a young artist would have been well aware of the critiques of new gestural abstract painting appearing in texts such as Douglas Crimp’s “The end of painting”. And in Buchloh allegorical procedures where he battered away the hundreds of talents in painting, obediently providing gestures of free expression with the cynical alibi of irony”.² Godfrey explains that at this time all possible responses the faculty member could have made to Humphries paintings had been made hackneyed by Crimp’s et al critique of the time. Both student and professor caught in an era between “abdication of criticality on the one hand and proclamation of the mediums depletion on the other”.³

Setting this scene shows the influences Humphries was reacting to, as she set-up a critical painting practice exploring abstraction. It also helped me fill in the gaps of the challenges to the status of painting that were occurring during the last half of the twentieth century. “Humphries herself said at the time of her early encounters with the medium – to paint at all denoted artistic failure. Painting’s status was the disavowed underside of art making, which gave it fresh meaning. It was almost a kind of rogue practice”.⁴

Godfrey identifies a shared metaphorical “silent shrug” as a key moment for the other three artists he discusses in this article. Amy Sillman, Charlene Von Heyl and Laura Owens, like Humphries, “all came of age in an environment in which their interests in abstract painting were discouraged”.⁵ This discouragement seems to have motivated these artists – the resistance they encountered

¹ Godfrey, Mark. "Statements of Intent: Mark Godfrey on the Art of Jacqueline Humphries, Laura Owens, Amy Sillman, and Charline Von Heyl." *Artforum* 52.9 (2014) Print. P.296

² Godfrey, Mark, the Guggenheim Christopher Wool Symposium, PTG: Abstraction since 1980. Online

³ Godfrey, Mark. "Statements of Intent" P.296

⁴ Godfrey, Mark, the Guggenheim Christopher Wool Symposium. Online

⁵ Godfrey, Mark. "Statment of Intent" P.296

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exciting in them artistic productivity. Amy Sillman has discussed her experience of starting an artistic career in this context. “For her the critiques of Abstract Expressionism had themselves congealed into cliché”,⁶ contrarily making abstraction an interesting and challenging place for Sillman to situate her practice; because it provided a *resistance* that she could push against.

Moving across to 1980s Europe the scene had a different focus. German born artist Charlene Von Heyl cites her resistance coming not so much from the critical discourse around painting and abstraction Humphries and Sillman were reacting to, but rather from a position of gender bias. She recalls her art school environment in Cologne “as heavily male, very jokey, [with] an ironic stance towards painting. Anarchistic and also quite arrogant”.⁷ This makes sense considering the other protagonists in her art world were the likes of Sigma Polke, Martin Kippenberger and Albert Oehlen.

Artist Laura Owens studied at CalArts in the early 1990s. Godfrey postulates that this Californian context would have been “no more hospitable to painting than the Whitney program of the mid-1980s”.⁸ Alumni Monique Prietto corroborates also found working with painting and abstraction at this time, in this environment could feel like a kind of *resistance*. Prietto recalls “when I was at CalArts declaring painting off limits seemed like a privileged decree sent down from above”. She explains that “in the crassest terms I felt that white people to whom art belonged got to end the narrative before anybody else could get their foot in the door”. Rather than being put off and “just by-passing the critical texts or letting them stop me dead in my tracks”, like the artists mentioned above, this resistance fueled her practice. She states that “I tried to take them in and glean any elements that might allow a poor fool like myself to carry on”.⁹

Godfrey’s article has made me think about the “resistances” that have or will shape me as an artist. To some extent at Elam if you chose to paint you are still confronted with the dismissal of the

⁶ *Ibid*

⁷ *Ibid*

⁸ *Ibid*

⁹ *Ibid*

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medium as described by these artists. Even more so if you choose to paint figuratively. Being a woman and engaging with the ideas of a movement such as Expressionism with its gender specific heritage – provides another level of resistance. But like the women I have discussed above although challenging I find these circumstances offer me something to push against. It is Elam's educational schema that has provided me with this criticality around my chosen medium. To paint at Elam is to meet resistance in the form of robust questioning of all your visual and critical assumptions. The most valuable lessons I have learnt here have been in understanding how to contextualize my work, and a way of setting up a painting practice that promotes a rigorous processing of outcomes that uses reading and research to inform it. Other factors informing a painter's practice who was educated at Elam, at the beginning of the third millennium will require continued reflexion and might only be understood with the distance of time.

Nostalgia, Modernity and the role of Trauma

"The reworking or re-presenting of found images through painting as a means of exploring a 'restorative' and/or 'reflective' nostalgia, speaks not just to personal trauma but also perhaps is a response to a perceived hostility towards an assumed orthodoxy regarding the status of painting and printmaking itself"¹⁰.

My work activates ideas of nostalgia. A feeling of nostalgia is triggered by something reminding us of the past, it carries with it a feeling of happy-sadness that is rooted in a longing for a time that no longer exists. Nostalgia appears in two ways according to Svetlana Boym. Firstly there is Restorative Nostalgia, a wish to resurrect the times before the recent past, to restore things to their former glory, – a rebirth of the old as the new nation. There is also a more critically aware form called Reflective Nostalgia. Reflective Nostalgics are fully aware that the place they feel nostalgic for is irretrievably lost – perhaps because it only ever existed as a tangible, yet unrealized possibility. ¹¹ "So

¹⁰ From my mid-year report from James Cousins. The perceived hostility towards painting is addressed in the section **Reading, Criticality and the milieu of Education** of this essay.

¹¹ Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic, 2001. Print. Introduction XIII-XIX.

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Reflective Nostalgia becomes an art of intimation, of speaking about the most personal and intimate pain and pleasures through cryptic disguise".¹²

This cryptic disguise could be cloaked in the language of memory in my paintings, which aim to evoke what Ian Farr classifies as Memory-Impressions. In the introduction to this Memory anthology he discusses this as the process by which recollection moves from a clear, vivid and defined focus to something that is flawed¹³. We recognize this suggestion in an aesthetic of blurred, out of focus, overexposed or damaged fragmentary, that's fragile nature elicits a need to cherish or preserve. "Yet the sentiment itself, the mourning of displacement and temporal irreversibility, is at the very core of the modern condition".

In an interview in the Thinking Aloud Series *Slow Thinking in Modernity*, Svetlana Boym states she is not an anti-modernist, she thinks that nostalgia and modernity are like two sides of the same coin. They are interconnected - nostalgia emerges as a distinctly modern disease, it is a symptom of the modern experience of time.¹⁴ "Nostalgia is often perceived as a longing for home, longing for space, but it's really a longing for another time or different treatment of time. So it's very important to think what the antidote to modernity is – do we want to go back somewhere to some utopian golden age – to the other space. Boym highlights two different concepts – modernity and modernism".¹⁵

Modernity is a term coined by Charles Baudelaire in his 1864 essay "The Painter of Modern Life" – Baudelaire used it to describe the "fleeting, ephemeral experience of life in an urban metropolis, and the responsibility art has to capture that experience".¹⁶ In this essay he describes

¹² Ibid.P252.

¹³ Farr, Ian. *Memory*. London: Cambridge, Massachusetts: Whitechapel Gallery; MIT, 2012. Print. Documents of Contemporary Art Ser.

¹⁴ <http://www.thinkingaloud.com/svetlana-boym:slowthinking>

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Kompridis, Nikolas. 2006. "The Idea of a New Beginning: A Romantic Source of Normativity and Freedom". In *Philosophical Romanticism*, edited by Nikolas Kompridis, 32-59. Abingdon, UK and New York: Routledge.

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how “each age has a deportment, a glance and a smile of its own. Within that unity we call a Nation, the various professions and classes and the passing centuries all introduce variety, not only in manners and gesture, but even in the actual form of the face. A certain type of nose, mouth and brow will be found to dominate the scene for a period”¹⁷. This notion of extracting “from fashion whatever element it may contain of poetry within history, to distil the eternal from the transitory”¹⁸ is explored in the art of Paulina Olowka and discussed in Jan Verwoert’s article *Historic Desire Unbound*.

In his discussion of the work of Olowka, Verwoert paints a verbal picture of the artist’s concerns. Like the artist herself he uses fashion as a metaphor in the manner of Baudelaire.¹⁹ Olowka’s concerns are around what we females have inherited from the Modernist cause and bringing focus to the marginalised contributions woman make that have and will continue to hold life together. “The shoulder pads, the good chats, and all the tricks, techniques, and teachings that make up the craft of living with the joy and pain of life. This craft is born out of improvisation, it’s the art of finding ways to make a day better (than it would have been, had one not tried turning it around)”²⁰.

The ‘*arts and crafts of daily improvisation*’ discussed are gendered female and are held up in counterpoint to the male contributions to modernity of warmongering and global power-plays for control. Verwoert laments the fact that “changing with the times, the seasons, the fashions, the economic, social, and political conditions, the art and craft of daily improvisation can’t be claimed by nations as heritage”²¹. The histories that are remembered and considered worth recording are the

¹⁷ Baudelaire, Charles, and Mayne, Jonathan. *The Painter of Modern Life: And Other Essays*. London: Phaidon ; 1964. Print.P.12

¹⁸Ibid.P.1-40

¹⁹Baudelaire, Charles. *The Painter of Modern Life* P.1-40

²⁰ Olowka, Paulina, Bovier, Lionel, Bujnowska, Anna, Szymczyk, Adam, Verwoert, Jan, and Kunsthalle Basel. *Paulina Olowka*. Zurich: JRP/Ringier, 2013. Print.

P.66

²¹ Ibid

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male “big picture theories of modernity [and] the delusions of power-brokers (who never had to save a day in their lives)”.²²

Olowksa’s oeuvre looks to redress this. Putting in the spotlight what Verwoert calls the ‘craft of living’, “all that [which] passes by below the radar”²³. The effort and thoughtfulness that goes into the daily tasks to create happy lives. These are what have shaped our modern world, not the grand master plans that get documented. Verwoert calls for us to appreciate this via nostalgia. If we use Svetlana Boym’s definitions, Verwoert is not suggesting a restorative nostalgia for the good old days that never actually existed but rather a reflective nostalgia for the “fruits garnered by the arts and crafts of daily improvisation.”²⁴ These interactions, occasions, and events offer something substantially more compelling than maps marking occupation, “because each art or craft has its very own mode, manner, key, and fashion for changing realities”.²⁵

Olowksa’s art uses style (her knitting-pattern paintings) and “affinities and solidarities with particular people”²⁶ (the woman of the Bloomsbury set) to craft a language of *reference* that “communicates moments in time”²⁷. Verwoert explains how Olowksa’s work challenges our understanding of what it means to make “reference”. Helping me to see ways that the invocation of my personal history, which is a key concern of my work, can be used both critically and in a contemporary way. The root word “Refer” comes from the Latin “referre, which means to carry something back (home)”²⁸. Accordingly Verwoert proposes that to “call something a reference is to imply that the one making it has an interest in restoring something to its proper place”.²⁹ In my

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Ibid P.68

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Ibid

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practice the restorative operation I am attempting has to do with both the status of painting and the concept of trauma.

My practice has evolved to become a 'working through' of ideas through the process of repeatedly drawing and painting personal photographs. The personal nature of the subject matter adds a level of emotional content that I am interested in exploring. Mike Kelley talks about "our shared culture [having] a presumption that all motivation is based on repressed trauma".³⁰ Using the psychoanalytical presumption of repressed trauma as the primary motivational driver and thus putting the unconscious mind in the driver's seat is something I find intriguing. Freudian Psychoanalyse however does not offer insight into the female construction of motivation. However artist and psychoanalytical theorist, Bracha Ettinger, does. Her work follows the Freudian and Lacanian traditions of psychoanalysis challenging their phallogocentric theories with her offerings on the Matrixial. In a lecture she gave at Leeds university she discusses "work that was produced from the converging spaces of an artist's studio practice in painting, and a feminist thinking through of issues that practice generated, through the lens of psychoanalysis, in order to use the latter to provide a language in which to articulate specifically feminine dimensions of her painting practice."³¹

The conceptual artist and philosopher Adrian Piper provides an introduction to Ettinger's *The Matrixial Gaze* that gave me access to her theories. "Looking at the Gaze through Lacanian psychoanalytical theory this paper gives insight into the process and the effects of painting. One of the key moves is to place painting 'beyond the visible' outside an optical logic, which has been used by the supporters of modernism to keep out a range of issues, practices and concerns that are relevant to women: imagination, stories, uncanny sensations, traces of the body".³² "It offers some thoughts on the feminist reconsideration of the politics of representation through the concept of the

³⁰ Art: 21 Art in the Twenty-First Century. Season Three. Dir. Atlas, Charles. Prod. Sollins Susan. PBS Home Video, 2005

³¹ Lichtenberg Ettinger, Bracha, and University of Leeds. Feminist Arts Histories Network. *The Matrixial Gaze*. Leeds, UK: Feminist Arts and Histories Network, Dept. of Fine Arts, U of Leeds, 1995. Print. (Introduction)

³² Ibid

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'gaze'. Ettinger's major concerns lie with those potential meanings and pre-meaning sensations that hover at the very threshold of subjectivity. Judgement shaped by personal feelings and opinions rather than external influences. Ettinger introduces concepts such as 'matrixial borderspace' and 'matrixial bordertime', and a space she terms 'Eurydicean', where she records barely visible traces, barely perceptible grains of the past, of missed encounters, of the future, what she terms 'matrixial futurity', with links to the preservation of life and rebirth."³³

Expressionism, the photo and the status of painting

Reaction to my paintings was that I needed to appreciate that my work relies a lot on an understanding of modern painting – in fact they are as much about painting as they are about portraiture. What they are not about, is capturing a likeness. If anything they are more in the vein of expressionist portraits engaged with emotion and subjectivity. This response lead me to understand that my practice combines concerns about the status of painting with what is perhaps perceived as the essence of Expressionism "the belief that there exists a content beyond convention, a reality beyond representation – in short, a Nature opposed to Culture"³⁴.

Searching for criticality around the practice of Expressionism led to Hal Foster's article *The Expressive Fallacy* published in the magazine *Art in America* in January 1983. This timing is interesting as it closely coincides with the resurgent debate about the status of painting I discussed in the first section of this essay. On the one hand Crimp's "polemic against the mediums recuperation as an emblem of universal humanism"³⁵ published in the spring of 1981. And on the other the 1980s saw "a return to painting as loudly as the critical establishment had proclaimed its death, the latest

³³ Ibid

³⁴ Foster, Hal. "The Expressive Fallacy." *Art in America* 71.1 (1983) Print. page 81

³⁵ Hudson, Suzanne, the Guggenheim Christopher Wool Symposium, PTG: Abstraction since 1980. Online

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chapter in the larger cycle of demise and resurrection that the medium had by that point been caught in for over a century"³⁶ contributed in no small way by the Neo Expressionists.

The scene setting of the 1980s as the perfect painting storm is discussed by Suzanne Hudson in the Guggenheim Christopher Wool Symposium. She explains that alongside Crimp with his concerns of "what he perceived to be the waning criticality in painting contra its ascendancy in alternative formats most notably photography"³⁷ and Benjamin Buchloh with his belief that Neo Expressionism and figurative painting in general, "cashed in on a contaminated past while upholding an erstwhile potency of authorship yoked to market driven claims for aura".³⁸ Sat artist and writer Thomas Lawson who declared that "Radical artists now are faced with a choice, despair, or the last Exit: painting."³⁹

Lawson's contribution to the discourse was "that photo based painting including his own unsavoury depictions of battered children was indeed important."⁴⁰ For Lawson, the photograph "is the modern world,"⁴¹ contemporary art therefore must engage with this pervasive and universal technology with its primacy of mediations.⁴² You would think that the most direct way to engage with the medium of photography is to take photographs but for Lawson "work that addresses the camera via the camera is too straightforwardly declarative in its critical intent".⁴³ Instead he picked the "least suitable vehicle available,"⁴⁴ and by reclaiming the "ancient art" he "thus maintained the possibility of paintings viability, even necessity in the face of its disavowal."⁴⁵

³⁶ Brydson, Catherine, Introduction to the Guggenheim Christopher Wool Symposium, PTG: Abstraction since 1980. Online

³⁷ Hudson, Suzanne, the Guggenheim Christopher Wool Symposium. Online

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ "October 1981." Artforum International 40.2 (2001): 60. Academic OneFile. Web. 12 Sept. 2015.

⁴⁰ Hudson, Suzanne, the Guggenheim Christopher Wool Symposium. Online

⁴¹ "October 1981." Artforum International 40.2 (2001): 60

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ Ibid

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So painting is back on the agenda and the Neo Expressionist painters' audacious contributions must have been widely felt by the art writers and critics of the day, for the Journal *Art in America* published two back to back issues in December 1982 and January 1983 devoted to the ideas of expressionism. Hal Foster's article *The Expressive Fallacy* was published in the Jan. '83 issue. This reading challenged my understanding of Expressionism. Foster discusses Expressionism not simply as a historic style but as a specific language used by artists (predominantly painters) that, in his view, does not acknowledge the crucial stage of mediation. Claiming instead a direct and immediate understanding of reality. Using a quote from Paul de Man's *Criticism and Crisis*, he begins his argument by positing how a language works.

"We know our entire social language is an intricate system of rhetorical devices designed to escape from the direct expression of desires that are, in the fullest sense of the term, unnameable – not because they are ethically shameful (for this would make the problem a simple one), but because unmediated expression is a philosophical impossibility. And we know that the individual who chose to ignore this fundamental convention would be slated either for crucifixion, if he were aware, or, if he were naïve, destined to the total ridicule accorded such heroes as Candide and all other fools in fiction or in life".⁴⁶

Contending that Expressionism is actually a language is the first challenge for Foster as he points out "Expressionism denies its own status as a language – a denial necessary given the Expressionist claim to immediacy and stress on the self as originary"⁴⁷. Foster believes that Expressionism is a language so obvious that its users forget many of its social and historical mediation, evasively forgetting how it actually "encodes the natural and simulates the immediate"⁴⁸.

Foster shapes how he believes artists practice the language of Expressionism and explains the fallacy of their tenets. Starting with the paradoxical nature of "a type of representation that asserts a presence"⁴⁹. There are two presences evoked by Expressionists. Firstly, that of the artist signified by

⁴⁶ Foster, Hal. "The Expressive Fallacy". page 80

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ Ibid

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the “indexical traces [of] brushstrokes”⁵⁰ which Foster deigns as only a proxy. Secondly, that of the real – Foster explains this fallacy by citing the perceived pivotal role Kandinsky had in breaking through representation. He argues that what Kandinsky actually did as an Expressionist artist was replace “a representation oriented not to reality (the coded, realist outer world) ... to an expression (the coded, symbolist inner world)”⁵¹.

Thus both representational forms can be analysed as codes, “and as codes both types are based on substitution (and thus *absence*).”⁵² Foster expands his argument using the genre of Classical representation painting as an example of the language of the realist outer world to compare with the language of Expressionisms coded inner world. The ‘objective reality’ of the representation in a classical painting tends to mask the material elements of the painting, the focus is on creating a staged reality, with a painting style that is naturalistic and non-intrusive. “The Classical Painter ‘substitutes for things his representations of them’ in such a way that reality seems to speak”⁵³.

While the ‘subjective reality’ of what the expressionist painter is trying to express, contains, in a more transparent way, the material elements constituent to the painting. The gestural marks and colours chosen to directly express the inner world reality are the substitution in the representation. As with all artists, the Expressionists inherit the history of the medium. The representational paradigm signalled by a stretch canvas exists first and foremost and the Expressionist painter needs to “supercede [this] with a paradigm of her/his own”.⁵⁴

Foster posits that “Expressionist immediacy ..., is an effect – of a two-fold mediation”⁵⁵. This effect was originally conceived by the Expressionists of the Fin de siècle, a tenor of “inner necessity” à la Kandinsky. Later Expressionists conceived this effect differently but still with the same underlying

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ Ibid

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intension. Abstract Expressionists such as Worringer connected with the viewer depicting a code that communicated the inner necessity of the artist. Citing Nietzsche, Foster explains the fallacy of perceiving this 'effect' as immediately understood. "The whole notion of an inner experience "enters our consciousness only after it has found a language that the individual understands – i.e. a translation of a situation into a familiar situation; "to understand," means, to be able to express something old and familiar".⁵⁶ This idea ties in with the overarching lens of Reflective Nostalgia key to my project. I try to paint that glimpse of something familiar and recognisable from a past. Provoking I hope both a meditation on the vagaries of time, and a connection, through an imbued sensibility, to a collective understanding of trauma.

In *The Expressive Fallacy*, Foster is arguing for an acknowledgement of the gap of rhetoricity between the self and expression. Pointing out the fallacy of giving "adequation to the self and expression"⁵⁷, when expression is a construction feed from a "pre-existent image-repertoire"⁵⁸ of the self. He gives *technique* and *inspiration* as examples of "the rhetoricity of Expressionism"⁵⁹. Using art historian Donald Gordon's proof of Expressionisms immediacy to deny it. Gordon states "Expressionist feeling could be direct and unruly to the point of formlessness".⁶⁰ Foster counters that formlessness is a form too, "coded and entirely conventional".⁶¹ It is Lacan's theory of Symbolic Order that Foster uses to deny the Expressionist privileging of the unconscious as unmediated inspiration. Lacan saw the "unconscious to be 'structured like a language', a language which in turn structures the self".⁶²

Foster's critique of Expressionism expanded my understanding and gave me a different lens to consider my decision making process through. By deciphering Expressionism into a language

⁵⁶ Ibid page 81

⁵⁷ Ibid

⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Ibid

⁶¹ Ibid

⁶² Ibid

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Foster made available to me a code I could use to define my own formal painting language. This is something Jordon Kantor writes about in his essay *The Tuymans effect*. He cites artist Luc Tuymans's specific representational shorthand of "distinctly crude rendering, his chalky palette and limited chromatic range, his use of photographic and filmic sources and cropping techniques, as well as his particular engagement with historical subject matter"⁶³, as the language of this construct. Kantor suggests this shorthand could be the result of working with two dimensional source material – just translating/interpreting the chiaroscuro of the photographic images. This is something I have been playing with too. What Tuymans' achieves with the shorthand discussed above is to create a semiotic language of paint that constructs "beyond a certain kind of photographically based painting"⁶⁴. The result no longer simply mimetic - the agency of paint and brushwork being given privilege.

Perhaps Foster is correct that there is a mediation stage in our processing of Expressionist art, but stressing this point above all else fails to address the power of affect elicited from Expressionist representations. Edvard Munch's work shows how an emotion transforms all our sense impressions. In many of Munch's works the settings or the scenery seem to reflect the anxiety, hysteria or depression felt by the people represented in them. He portrays this with his colour palette, the frenzied lines of his lino-cuts, and the intense feelings of space he creates; using distortion and caricature in his figures to portray these emotions and set the tone of his paintings.⁶⁵ Munch achievement of investing his painting with something beyond the descriptive is what I aim for with the portraits I have worked on this year.⁶⁶

Whether you agree with Foster or not, David Salle puts it succinctly "Expressionism, the style – I think it's interesting if you're a painter. It's an extremely important technical idea, to form an

⁶³ Kantor, Jordan. "The Tuymans Effect." *Artforum International* 43.3 (2004): 164. Web. P.1

⁶⁴ *Ibid* p.3

⁶⁵ Gombrich, E. H. *The Story of Art*. 16th Ed., Rev., Expanded and Redesigned. ed. London: Phaidon, 1995. Print. p.447-456.

⁶⁶ Mullins, Charlotte. *Painting People : Figure Painting Today*. New York: D.A.P./Distributed Art Pubs., 2006. Print. Page 7

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image through a painterly process, instead of drawing an image, then painting it in. It has to do with realising an end through means that are hard to control, which is vastly important to painters". For me 'realising an end' has entailed transgression in the painting process. Creating a slippage between the usual established hierarchies of painting. This causes things to become undone and remade in the process of making that is not simply about making a portrait but also exploring what the medium of painting adds to portraiture and questioning the validity of representing the idea of portraiture in painting.

A year of following my research interests has led to setting up;

A practice that looks to continually engage with critical discourse on the medium of painting;

A practice that utilises the technical ideas of Expressionism as a strategy to connect with the viewer with an immediacy that could be considered unmediated;

A practice that applies understandings I have gained on the co-dependent relationship between trauma and nostalgia. Assisting me in defining a code of nostalgia that is collectively recognisable; and that provokes reflection on the notion of time, and a connection to a collective understanding of trauma;

A practice whose content is not concerned with the "big picture theories of modernity or warmongering and global power-plays for control,"⁶⁷ but rather underlining the marginalised contributions woman make that pass below the radar. The art of finding ways to make a day better. Reflective Nostalgia has been about recording the daily tasks of living.

⁶⁷ Olowka, Paulina, Bovier, Lionel, Bujnowska, Anna, Szymczyk, Adam, Verwoert, Jan, and Kunsthalle Basel. Paulina Olowka. Zurich: JRP/Ringier, 2013. Print. P66.

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