

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### A WRITTEN INTERVIEW

**UNIVERSAL THEMES: Investigating and Understanding.**

**ARTIST/CRAFTSPERSON: Connections to other Artists, Periods and Cultures.**

- 1.1 Please list other visual artists from whom you have drawn inspiration or been influenced. Specific works would be very useful.

Samuel Palmer; Moonlit Scene with a Winding River; The White Cloud 1833-4;  
A Hilly Scene 1826

Jackson Pollack; Guardians of the Secret 1943; Pasiphae '43; Male and Female '42

Dubuffet; The Smoker by a Wall '45; Medieval Garden, Butterfly Wings '55; The Garden of Bibi Trompette, Butterfly wings '55

Anthony Gross; early etchings

Simone Martini; The Annunciation

Bruegel; Parable of the Blind

Pisanello; Profile of a Princess with Butterflies

Paolozzi; "As and When" series

Picasso; Wols; Klee, Durer, Duffy, Roault; Bonnard; Karel Appel; Rodan; Alan Davie; Sam Francis; Soutine; Outsider Art

- 1.2 What do you consider to be the most important issues, content, etc. of your work?

The content of my work is autobiographical. It is used as a vehicle for creative endeavour, creative performance and analysis; critiqueing imaginative and creative leaps, and intuitive insights. Images spring from personal experience in the context of earlier work, inspiration by nature, by art itself, art making itself. The sublime experience of imagination and intelligence unified through creative practice.

Content is the romantic, dealing with identity, anxiety, love, death, fecundity, archetypal images and more recently moral propositions and indomitable myths.

Content is the analysis and role of subjectivity and intuition in my working process; content is creative process, technique and structure; imagination is content.

1.3 Where do you get the ideas for your art?

I have travelled extensively in Europe, America, Canada, Turkey and Iran, and I have always visited the great architecture and collections of those countries. I lived in Rome for 2 years and this experience ignited the desire to celebrate life. I have read a great deal of literature, Irish Murdoch explores creative frisson with insight. I love museums, and the art history and world history they contain. They are a great source of inspiration and insight. Cultural interpretations of the mysteries of life offer a spiritual confirmation through recognised universal themes.

By confronting myself endlessly with art, I have sought insight. My earlier work was concerned with the external world, my recent work is more personal and internalised.

1.4 What is it about the media you choose to work in, that is so essential your art?

Oil paint is the major medium I now work in. I was trained as a painter/printmaker, and for many years I worked exclusively in drawing and printmaking. In 1984 I became a full time lecturer and the demands of the work was such that I couldn't sustain a working relationship with an image, through printmaking, with the spasmodic time I had available. I found that I was disconnecting with the prints, and on the odd days I worked on them, there was a struggle to unpick earlier discussions with myself, and reconnect with the work.

I took up oil painting again in 1987, at a time when I discerned a need to change direction. I wanted to be exploratory, to reconceptualise my work, to work more exploratory and more directly.

The immediacy of painting allows within a 6 hour working day a whole series of debates to surface in one or more works.

I needed some intellectual gratification at the end of a studio working day, I sought that through immediacy rather than through the cooler protracted time scale of printmaking I still make linoprints and monotypes. In using paint as I do now, I sense the creative muse at work within me. The material of paint itself, produces the context for a textural, expressively physical dynamic interaction to occur within a psychologically revelatory process, painting as an illuminating experience.

1.5 How do you see the drawing process and its importance to the making of your work?

Drawing has been the mainstay of my working process. The hand/eye co-ordination underpins confidence. Selectivity can be addressed, readily and economically through drawing. Drawing is the first stage in the understanding and realisation of content in relation to imagination and pictorial opportunity. As a student I undertook objective drawing for 3 years, a humbling experience initially.

Now I do little objective drawing. I will draw objectively if a work demands it. I draw from the imagination and use the sketch book as an intuitive place to note ideas. I use charcoal and oil pastel a lot now, but I learnt to draw with a pencil, an unfashionably difficult method to learn to use. It has none of the gratuitous fluidity that charcoal can offer. Pencil drawing was for me the process I had to bite on as a student, as drawing was "God" at my first art school; Walthamstow, a renowned course in the 60's and 70's run by an excellent pedagogue, Stuart Ray.

Drawing was the key to evolving self esteem, a first sign of ability recognised by the artists teaching me.

Drawing exposes all, and is the key to the thinking and making process. Drawing skills will allow access to perceptive analysis of working processes.

It is deceptively simple and direct, but it is the key to complexity, sophistication and ownership.

1.6 What ideas or themes do you feel are the most important to your work?

Celebration; of nature; imagination; colour: the romantic tradition; the review of the heirarchy of subject matter; objectifying subjectivity; transformation; synthesis; intuition; autobiography; moral propositions; indominatable myths; religion; creation and man's place in it; responsibility; anxiety; identity; sex; sexuality; self-determination.

1.7 What technical processes or methods of working do you employ in the making of your work?

Imprimatura: is the classical term for a glaze of transparent colour used to create a toned ground for painting.

Toned ground: serves the same purpose as an imprimatura.

Underpainting: time honoured method of laying the foundation by blocking the main shapes with thin paint.

Broken colour: applying paint or pastel in small separate strokes of pure colour without blending.

Drybrush: a small amount of thick colour is picked up on a brush which is skimmed lightly over a drying painting surface.

Impasto: thick opaque paint applied heavily with brush or knife.

Knife painting: versatile but less sensitive way of applying paint.

Alla prima (at first try): occasionally on small studies.

Scumbling: is the rough application of a dry light, semi-opaque colour over a darker layer of dry opaque paint.

Scraffitto: derived from the Italian work graffiare, meaning "to scratch", and refers to a method of scratching or scraping through a layer of paint and expose the colours underneath.

Wet in wet: colours are applied over or into each other while they are wet.

Wet over dry: applying fresh paint over a previously dried colour.

- 1.8 Please supply a personal statement about the piece or pieces you hope to exhibit and if possible relate it to work you have produced in the past which is in the Wigan Loan Collection.

The oil painting "Renewal", is an autobiographical portrait, examining metamorphosis and personal renewal. The image is of a profile, containing an inner profile. They are overlapped with that of a butterfly wing, a symbol for me of nature's metamorphosis from grub to beauty. The butterfly symbolises a frailty, and its erratic flight pattern signifies the flexibility needed for survival. Its image for me is a metaphor for the desire to transform ones self and also to survive oneself. I suspect this images history was locked into my imagination in 1968. On many visits to the Louvre, the rather private painting by Pisanello, the "Portrait of a Princess in Profile, Surrounded by Butterflies", was a sublime revelation. The frailty of beauty inspired comprehension and insight into my own sensibility. The two floating forms in Renewal, one of an archetypal form of an asterisk (a mandala), refers to an earlier etching made in 1968, the other more whimsical form is there, as they both are, as intuitive contextual markers, the unconscious at work.

The works of mine in the Wigan Loan Collection, also have images of myself in them. One portrait in oil pastel, is a fairly direct study of myself in a stoic pose in a fecund celebratory "Garden" work, gardening being a major therapeutic outlet. One of the others, is a "blue profile" image within a dynamic and expressive imaginary environment.

The portrait in "Renewal" reverses the pictorial potency, the profile dominates the picture, is highly charged, is less introspective than the earlier images; but is still involved with the "holding on" or "letting go" debate which I am engaged in within my work. Transformation is my desire and my objective.

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