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UCIA7003

MA Critical Appraisal
#1014707 / Dwayne Bell

Reportage Illustration
'Waiting'

Word count is beneath 5500 before the addition of quotes & bibliography.

APPRAISAL OUTLINE

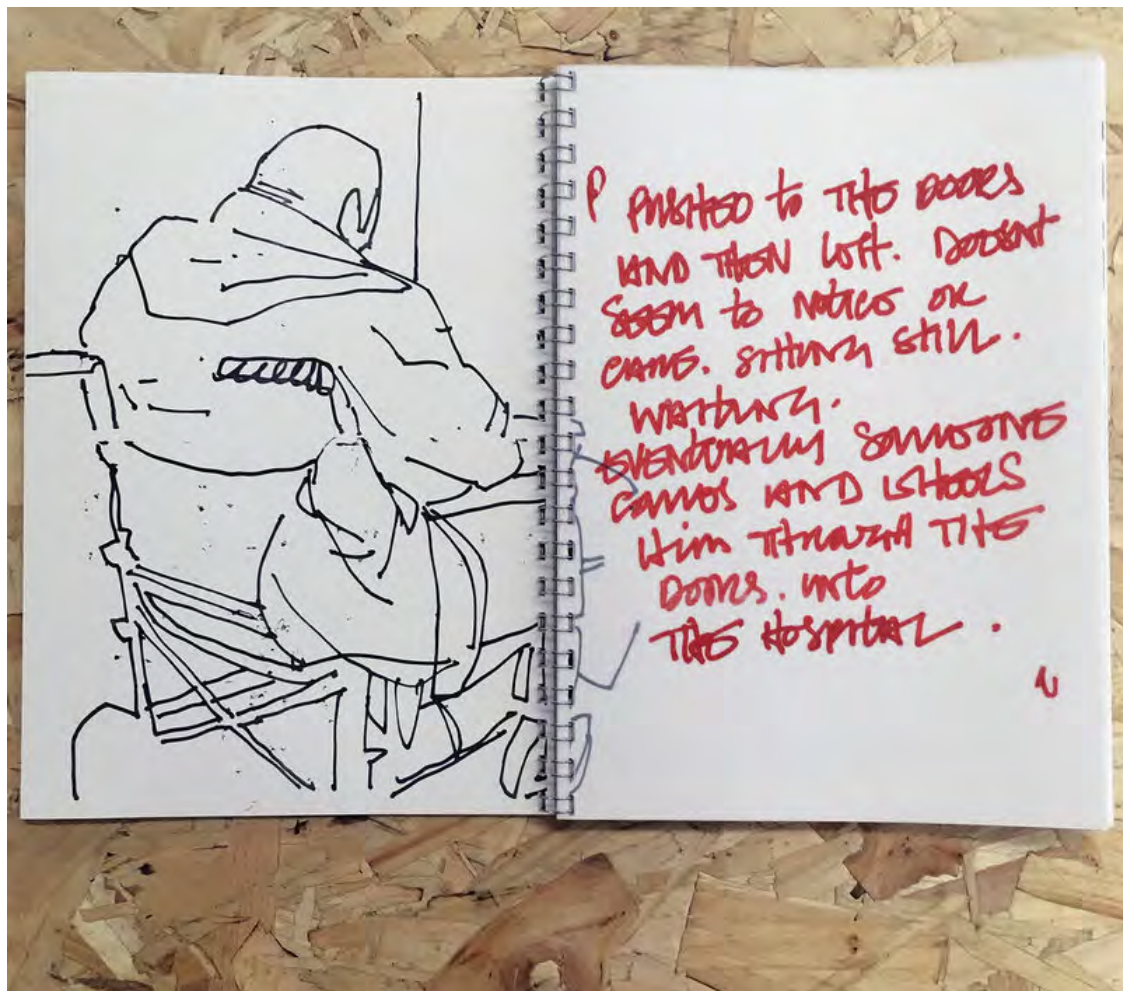
The following appraisal, created in response to UCIA7003, will discuss the key themes, both philosophical and pragmatic, and the considerations which informed the practical element of the module, built upon understandings provided by previous modules.

Further to those underpinning themes, I will reflect upon the management of the project, discussing issues arising from working in partnership with Healing Arts and ultimately, the Cumberland Infirmary.

The appraisal will outline two bodies of work and my ambitions and aims for each. The former, the initially proposed project at the outset of the module and the latter, the project I was finally able to realise. As will be made clear, whilst both projects share similar intentions, due to a range of unforeseen circumstances and considerations, they present differentiating factors; the second project ultimately becoming a modified version of the first.

In examining my motivations for this module, I will reflect upon my working process and my relationship with it. A focus of this reflection will be the artists of influence whose work has had considerable impact upon UCIA7003, as well as those whose influence has been evidenced throughout the entirety of these postgraduate studies.

In conclusion I will detail and discuss the final exhibition, decisions made regarding content and presentation as well as future developments for both the work and the creative relationship moving forward between myself, Healing Arts and the Cumberland Infirmary.



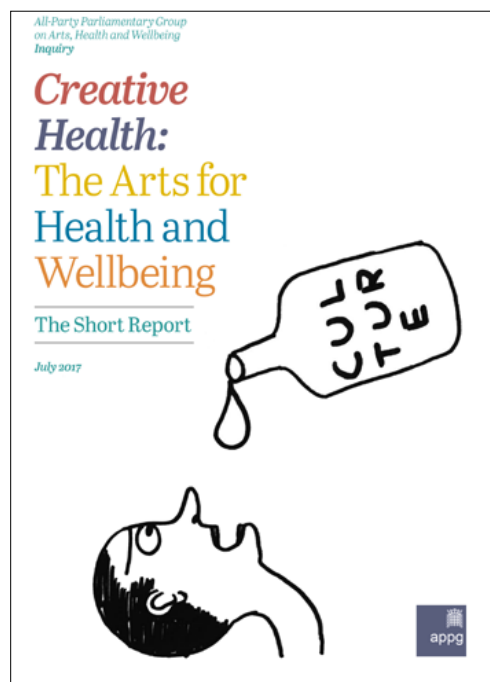
PROJECT OUTLINE

For module UCIA7003 I worked in partnership with Healing Arts- an organisation that aims to create arts opportunities in Cumberland Infirmary, a general hospital based in Carlisle that provides a wide range of clinical services including maternity/neonatal care, a 24 hour A&E, complex vascular and general specialist services plus outpatient clinics.

This practice of introducing arts programmes in clinical settings has grown in popularity throughout the UK, particularly following the release of ‘Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing’, a paper published by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing – who were formed in 2014 with a charter to ‘improve awareness of the benefits that the arts can bring to health and wellbeing’. As well as the quantitative approaches that previously typified health care in the UK, particular focus is now being given to qualitative measures, largely because of this specific paper’s conclusive results and the research that surrounds it.

We are calling for an informed and open-minded willingness to accept that the arts can make a significant contribution to addressing a number of the pressing issues faced by our health and social care systems.

(APPG, 2017)



2017's Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing report. This, the Short Report presents a summary in 16 pages. Available from: www.artshandwellbeing.org.uk

Healing Arts have been delivering arts projects in Cumberland Infirmary for 18 months, working with a wide range of creative practitioners such as writers, musicians and dancers. I was the first artist who expressed a desire to work directly with patients and visitors on an individual basis.

I was given complete creative freedom by the hospital's artistic coordinator and over the course of several visits an idea began to form, which I then proposed to explore. This initial concept was to produce a collection of responsive figurative reportage illustrations depicting the hospital's patients, staff and visitors. The project would be delivered as a thematic continuation of the previous works undertaken (Forester, Drawn Together, Irving), allowing me to expand upon positive aspects of the practice that these projects had informed, whilst simultaneously providing new challenges to promote and expand my creative development.



Examples of previous projects. From top left, clockwise: Forester (2016), Irving (2017), Drawn Together (2017). The fact that each image depicts someone sitting in a chair is purely coincidental and, if anything, suggests a preference for drawing people sitting down.

This excerpt from notes created on my first hospital visit provides an insight into my initial thought process:

“First thoughts are that the main atrium is very public and could be a bus/train station or airport (at first glance) and the further you dig, the less generic and the more obviously medical things become. Doors lead to more ‘official’ and clinical atmospheres. The transition from the public, casual and normal atmosphere in the atrium, to the more serious and quiet takes place very quickly. People hooked up to machines and conversations pertaining to potential life and death situations take place only yards from a Costa coffee and casual chatter.”

During this scoping phase of the project, the phrase ‘patient journey’ was used repeatedly to describe the individual pathway that is a patient’s treatment (short or long term) and care experience. When considered in conjunction with the layout of the hospital, this ‘journey’ becomes both figurative and literal. It was my early intention to encompass these two ideas, exploring the hospital’s experiential ‘layers’, ranging from busy and/or noisy public interactions to clinical, serious conversations in private rooms and the wide spectrum of experiences in between these extremes. I proposed to produce a series of illustrations that would reveal human stories; interweaving written text and drawing techniques (an approach that I had previously touched on but not yet fully exploited). In practical terms, I intended to use the basic tools of a sketchbook and fountain pen to draw a collection of patients in their hospital surroundings; on wards and in other semiotically significant areas and allow their own personal ‘patient journey’ to guide the image’s narrative content.

For this proposal to become a reality it was essential to have one-to-one interactions with patients and staff and be able to engage in conversations without an agenda or preconceived ideas regarding the direction of the ultimate visual conclusion. My aim was to unearth compelling or unexpected personal narratives without prejudice – an approach which had been successful in ‘Drawn Together’, where several of my subjects revealed unexpected and compelling personal histories; for example, Billy, a newsagent and familiar local character who disclosed a background in biochemistry. Engaging me with a series of tales from this surprising past life, Billy’s stories offered a wonderful juxtaposition to his current position and the unassuming environment of his small corner shop in which I drew him.

If reportage is considered a form of 'visual journalism', then this hospital project would make efforts to make links with this notion via 'visual interviews'. At the outset I had no formal idea of how this might present itself aesthetically but the work of Alan E Cober, Olivier Kugler and Richard Johnson were forefront in my mind, from a conceptual point of view.

INTENTIONS

The main intentions of this project were to produce a collection of drawings and to form an open-ended and potentially long-term working relationship. Despite the potential for the continuation beyond this module, I was aware that I would also have to work towards a summative conclusion. In light of this I had two key things in mind; firstly, that the eventual outcome would build upon those of my previous projects, completing a cohesive body of work. Secondly, that the work would ultimately form an exhibition or be otherwise disseminated within the hospital. Given that the results of the project would be drawing-based, it also felt safe to assume that reproduction/print would form an important part of the eventual outcome.

Throughout the process of my MA studies, I have experienced a growing sense of ownership of a distinct aesthetic or visual language, utilising a purposeful black line to produce a strong contour depiction of my subject. Rather than challenge or alter this in my final project, I felt compelled to explore and exploit it. This type of line-making lends itself to reproduction, particularly when the scale of the work is dramatically increased, effectively exaggerating the textures of the material, it's application and the beautifully imperfect details of ink of paper.



Alan E Cober
The Forgotten Society (1972)
Cober's work was a key influence
in previous projects and has been
instrumental in the development of
my practice.

THE FOUR THREADS

Four common threads run throughout my postgraduate projects- the 'human narrative' theme, the issue of source imagery, the ambition to work more instinctively and lastly, the need to respond, as a reportage artist, creatively to external restrictions out-with my control. It was my intention that this final project would clearly confront the first three of these threads, whilst not allowing inevitable obstacles to derail progress.

1 - HUMAN NARRATIVES

The initial motivation to use my postgraduate studies as a vehicle to explore reportage illustration was fueled by my habitual sketchbook drawing practice, primarily driven by the visual documentation of my daily bus commute to work. I wished to explore the magnetic attraction that pulls me towards drawing people in certain environments.

Whilst the specific guiding subject of each individual module has changed, the underpinning theme remains singular- that of 'human narrative'. The techniques utilised to communicate these stories have at times been literal, overt and direct, using both hand-rendered type and audio techniques but 'stories' have also been carefully and subtly woven into the details of drawings, adding depth of meaning via less obvious layers of narrative.

A viewer instinctively attaches significance and understanding to details such as body language, facial expression, clothing or accessories and environmental features. A drawing of a person devoid of explanatory text or large areas of detail will nonetheless prompt viewers to instinctively form a human narrative around all that they are being shown. Historically this phenomenon has become apparent when my work is shared, with the viewer often attaching a story or biography formed from their own experiences and understandings to explain and bring life to the subject – a semiotic reading of the drawing, if you will. This, our natural human tendency to relate and form understanding, is an aspect of reportage (and image-making on a whole) that I had not fully appreciated until recently.



Sample sketchbook spreads demonstrating a natural proclivity toward capturing snapshots of human narrative.

2 - WORKING FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

Reflecting on previous projects (Forrester, Drawn Together, Irving), my habit of working from reference photographs, often despite intentions not to, became an obvious obstacle in my personal creative development. I chose to confront this key issue head on in the last module with the aim of breaking this cycle and created my proposal to ‘visually interview’ people around the principle of only drawing on-site. Both Kugler and Johnson offer sound reasons for adopting the practice of working directly from source photography- Kugler, because he wants to interview and get to know his subject in the short time he is with them and therefore feels he gains more via conversation and Johnson because he is often in unsafe or compromising situations where drawing from life simply isn’t a feasible option. In my case, my motivation to draw from source photography seemed instead to stem from the fear of removing my ‘safety net’ and I began to question and confront my fear of producing unsuccessful work in front of my subject and the distraction of becoming focused on how the audience might perceive my work.



“While he is with his subjects, Kugler rarely sketches; he is keen to note everything they say and do, to take in every detail of the faces, clothes and surroundings with his eyes and his camera. Later on, in the quiet of his studio, he will fill an A2 pad with pencil drawings of the encounter. His illustrative style is subservient to rigorous research and enquiry.”

(Walters, 2017)



Reportage illustrators who work from photographs.
Left: Olivier Kugler, *Escaping Wars and Wives: Encounters with Syrian Refugees* (2018)
Right: Richard Johnson *‘Canada’s Cold War’* - on exercise in the Ukraine, for *The Washington Post* (2015)

3 - NON ACADEMIC DRAWING

Besides human narratives, the other key consideration of my postgraduate studies has been achieving a balance between ‘good drawing’ and ‘loose drawing’. In this instance I am using the term ‘good drawing’ to describe a studied and technically ‘correct’ or academic style of drawing – the type of carefully executed drawing that often results from using source photography in order to achieve high levels of detail and accuracy. While there is merit in academic, representational drawing, it often presents with a lack of warmth or feeling – the artist is not present in the work. When we consider that reportage illustration should report not only on the specific detail of a moment but also on the emotional or expressive subtext or content, a ‘responsive’ style may capture the essence of experience more effectively.

In his book ‘Illustration A Theoretical & Contextual Perspective, Alan Male discusses visual note-taking and drawing responsively on location thus:

“Observational drawings of this nature can be less formal regarding visual language, particularly when compared to detailed scrutiny of subject matter required of purely academic objective drawing. A ‘looser’ and more economic approach to mark making will enable the associative and atmospheric nature of what one is visually recording to be a priority. Creative and ambient approaches can be developed. This way of working can often record the ‘soul’ and influence of a subject or location, and goes beyond documenting surface features, it also goes beyond the ‘cold’ visual representation of people and there can start to be a capturing of human emotion, mood, character and personality”

(Male, 2017)

If we consider the recording of 'soul' (a key aim across all of my postgraduate projects) the effect of going beyond cold visual representation towards capturing human emotion, mood, character and personality, Male may also easily be referring to responsive reportage illustration. We might also conclude that reportage illustration is most effective when drawn observationally, on location (when not restricted by other factors) and that this condition triggers a more 'holistic' and rounded depiction of a scene or a moment in time. Lucinda Rogers is a clear example of an artist who chooses only to draw on location and her work is all the more stimulating for it.

Despite a reliance on drawing from photography at the beginning of this module, I held a growing belief that by working from source imagery in the distant comfort of my studio, I was denying my work a number of outside influences which could positively affect the outcome, for example – movement, sound, weather, light changes or shifts in perspective. Each project where I drew from photography, regardless of the results, I felt a shadow of disappointment that I had not fully satisfied the criteria I had set myself.

Cumberland Infirmary have a clear policy of disallowing photography on hospital grounds and this restriction automatically removed the safety-net which had historically prevented me from achieving desired levels of risk-taking and creative exploration. Without the 'insurance' that photography offered, I had no other choice but to draw directly from life. It was with a new sense of freedom that I began to create what became a prolific collection of on-site drawings, generating 70 responsive drawings in the space of one week.

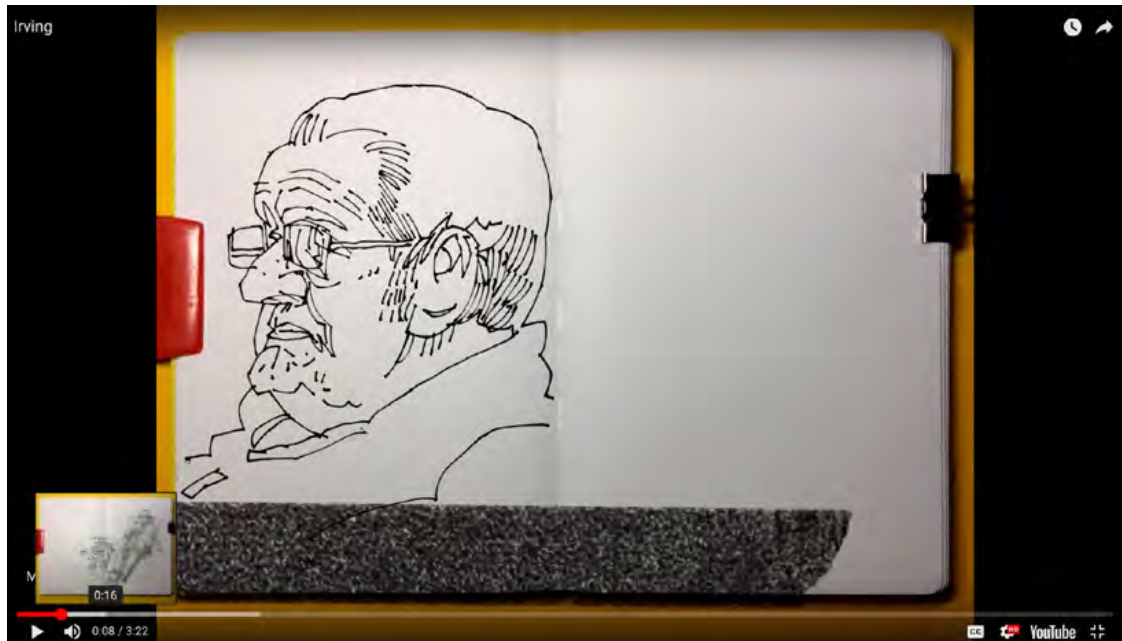


Reportage artist, Lucinda Rogers, drawing on location. Left: New York. Right: Ridley Road Market, London.

4 - RESPONDING TO OBSTACLES

With each project there are a myriad of potential circumstances or situations which could impact on the intended direction of work. From minor issues such as difficulty sourcing specific materials to more major concerns, such as clashing schedules or severe time restrictions; each project has presented new obstacles to which I've had to respond creatively. For example in 'Irving' I was unable to record a suitable dialogue directly from the subject to accompany my presentation as planned. It took considerable time to realise that my own dialogue could act as a substitute. It was later, upon reflection, that I realised my recorded voice actually added a very personal component to the outcome, making the final work much richer (dwayne-bell.com/irving).

In 'Waiting', my initial proposal to interview and closely sketch a variety of patients and staff was enthusiastically received by Healing Arts but ultimately proved impossible in practical terms as the majority of my time became consumed by meetings with ward staff and department heads/management. Despite the logistical issues and bureaucratic barriers, those in positions of responsibility clearly wanted the project to go ahead. There was however an apparent conflict between their obvious willingness and their primary concern for those in their care. The project and the considerations that surrounded it were unprecedented within the hospital, therefore there lacked an understandable system or framework that would allow its smooth progress. Wards initially open to me were declared out of bounds, leaving only the public areas for on-site drawing. These circumstances profoundly affected the course of the project's realisation stage, instigating new creative challenges for me to confront over what was now a much shorter period of time. It wasn't until the later stages of the module that any real, meaningful progress was made regarding clarifying a direction for the work.



'Irving' an animated sketchbook which incorporates my own narration. Available [here](#).

INFLUENCES

Frustrations caused by the situation described above, lead me to seek answers in the work of others. In addition to the familiar list of influences upon my ongoing research into reportage illustration (Kugler, Johnson, Rogers, Searle et al), two other artists played a significant roles in the creation of ‘Waiting’- namely Jonathan Twingley and George Grosz...

JONATHAN TWINGLEY

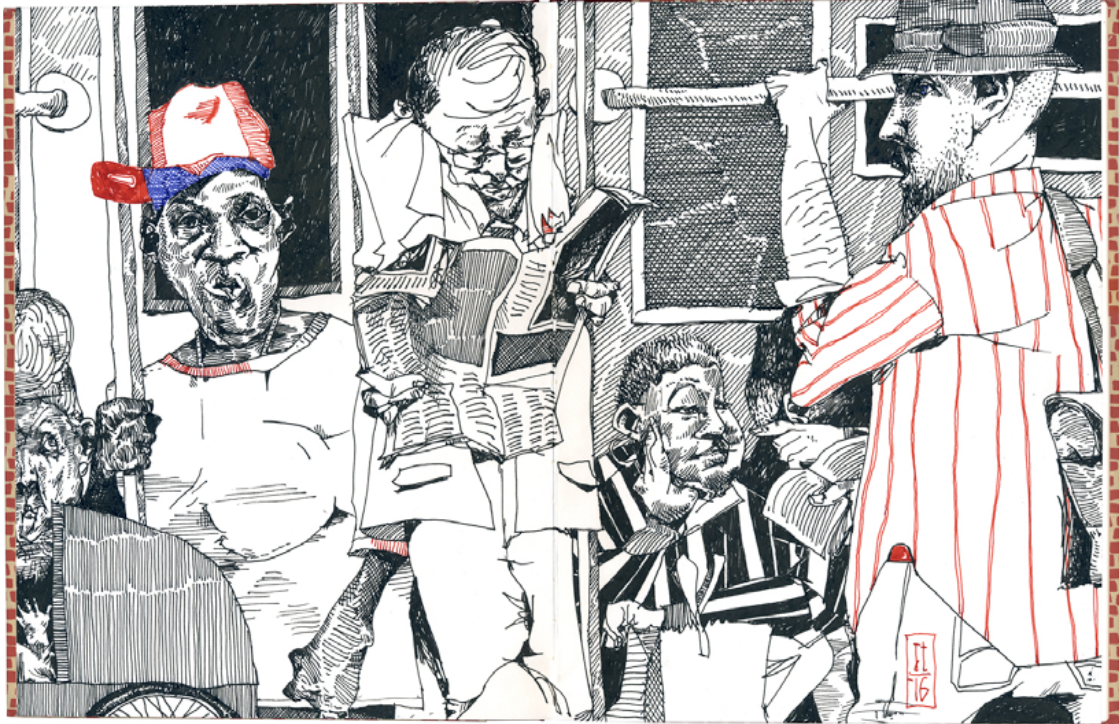
An ongoing challenge throughout my MA studies was the exploration and integration of non-academic approaches to drawing (academic drawings traditionally feature representational, ‘accurate’ or formal depictions of a subject). In this project, to confront this head on, much of my research was based around artists who approach drawing with a responsive outlook or attitude and manage to personalise their work. New York based Illustrator Jonathan Twingley’s methods and aesthetic played a key role in provoking the progress I made during the creation of ‘Waiting’.

Jonathan purposefully places restrictions upon his creative process, which force him to produce unusual and otherwise unlikely imagery; for example he may quickly sketch something on location and then later re-create it in more detail, drawn from memory, allowing fact to merge with fiction or feeling. Another technique he employs is the capturing of an entire experience, such as a museum trip, in a singular composite drawing (an exercise that he calls ‘everything at once’). He will create several separate elements from different viewpoints and then unite them on the page, celebrating in the resulting lack of cohesive scale or perspective. It is fair to say that he prefers adopting an almost destructive approach, walking the fine line between what is perceived to be ‘wrong’ and ‘right’ and as a result of this, his work is bubbling over with energy and individuality. I can confidently pinpoint Jonathan’s creative perspective as a driving influence during the development of ‘Waiting’ so it gave me great comfort to read these words on Jonathan’s social media:

“As an artist I often feel torn between loose drawings and tight drawings, Gestural versus Deliberate.”

(Twingley, 2018)

It is reassuring to know that I’m not alone in this dilemma and that even the most risk-taking, rule-breaking artists and illustrators experience this ongoing drawing dilemma.

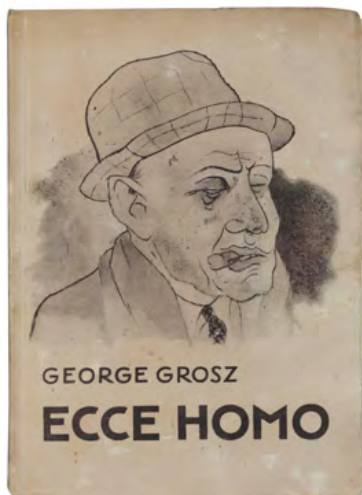


Jonathan Twingley
Examples of Jonathan's
sketchbook work.
www.twingley.com

GEORGE GROSZ

The second artist whose work directly impacted on my process is George Grosz (1893 – 1959). Prior to this project I was familiar with the German artist Grosz's work but not enough to consider him a key influence. This changed when I unearthed a copy of his seminal work 'Ecce Homo' (1923) which depicts an ugly, hedonistic and fearful German society struggling to find normalcy in the aftermath of the First World War.

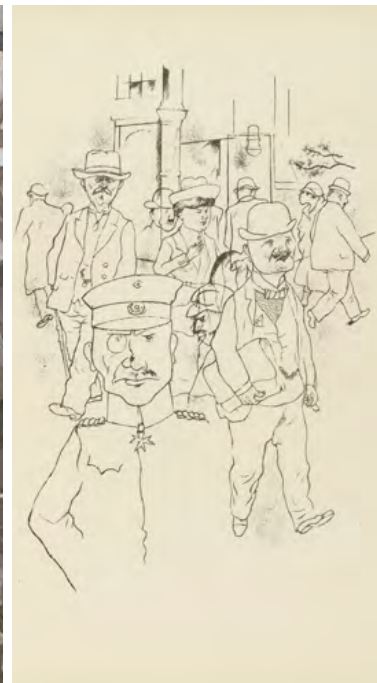
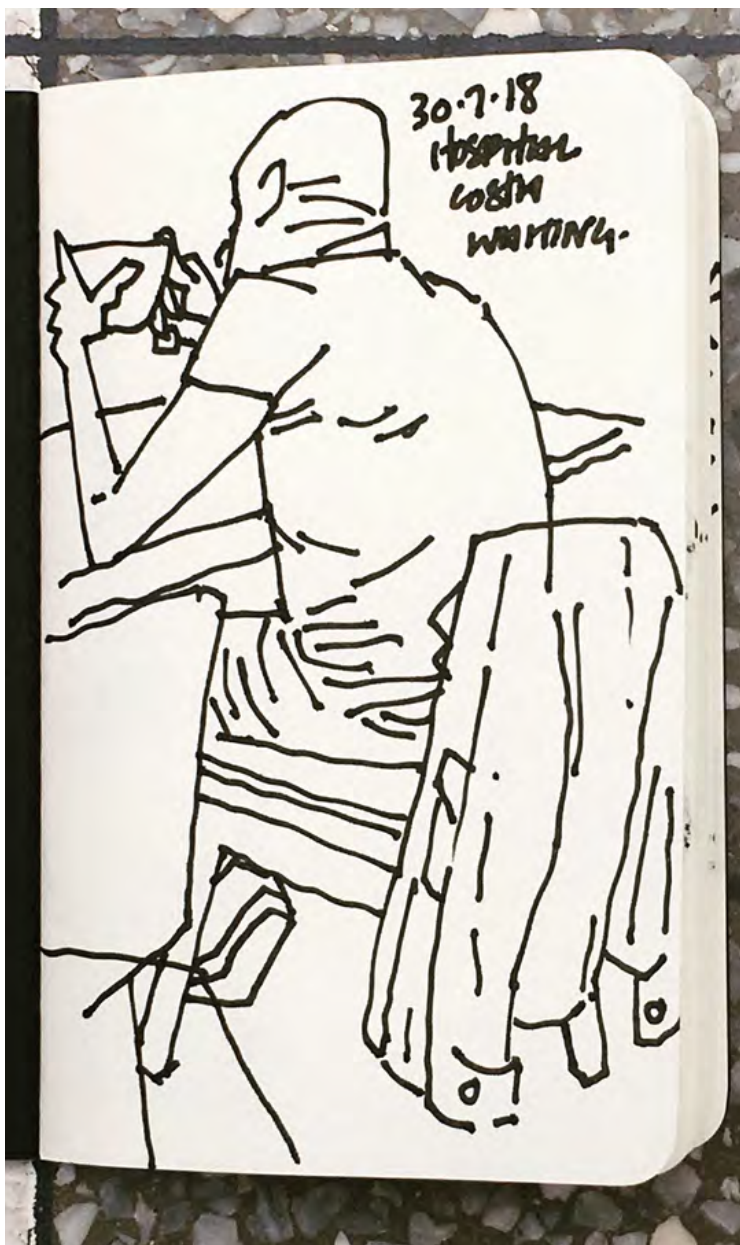
Individually, the drawn work contained in Ecce Homo is striking but often slight – in some cases, sketches formed from a few simple lines. However, when viewed as a collection, the work gains a combined strength and imposing gravitas; the sum becoming truly greater than its parts. I realised, in viewing 'Ecce Homo' that I needed to focus more on how the collected work communicates overall and not become too distracted with the individual merits of each singular drawing.



George Grosz
Ecce Homo
(Behold the Man)
"First published in 1923 but suppressed, the collection offers an un-suppressing vision of human nakedness, lust, greed and cruelty".
(google books 2018)

COMPARISON

Despite being hugely influenced by both of these artists (and others previously mentioned), 'Waiting' represents the continuing development of a visual language that I can call my own. Rather than borrowing qualities and techniques from artists in an attempt to mimic their aesthetic, I have looked to both Twingley and Grosz for conceptual guidance. Both Twingley and Grosz's approaches triggered a new, fresh feeling of confidence which directly influenced the work I produced for 'Waiting'.



From left, clockwise:
Sketchbook from 'Waiting'.
Photographed on location in hospital
waiting area (2018)

Plate from Grosz's 'Ezra Homo'
(1923)

Twingley sketchbook spread (2016)

SEMIOTICS

In discussing the ‘human narratives’ presented by my work, I have alluded to semiotic theory – the study of the signs, significance and communication present in all aspects of society. During the course of my postgraduate studies I have attempted to gain an overt understanding of how semiotic theory can be utilised in order to allow an artist to orchestrate the viewer’s reading of a piece or body of work.

As with everything we encounter in society, semiotic understanding is a clear function of reportage illustration. It could be stated that the inclusion or omission of specific details within a drawing is a demonstration of semiotic consideration, whether or not the decision-making is overt and conscious or driven by creative instinct. For example, by including details such as stop buttons or hand rails in a drawing (sign), I am indicating to the viewer that ‘this image is set on a bus’ (signified).

In addition to the selection of image content, HOW a drawing is created has a covert impact on how it is read. For example, a semiotic analysis of a drawing from ‘Waiting’ might suggest that an appropriate sense of stillness, permanence or longevity is provided by the uniform use of purposeful and definite black lines. In contrast to this, textural, soft tonal mark-making might suggest movement and ephemerality. It could be further argued that the physical confines of only drawing in a small pocket book (selected because it allowed me to create work unnoticed in a public space) helped to communicate an appropriate sense of self-containment which was fitting to the project’s theme. In contrast, large surfaces, due to the physical nature of drawing, naturally provoke gestural or flamboyant line-work, which in the instance of ‘Waiting’ would create an unsuitably energetic tone.

In addition to producing a body of drawn work, I also decided to create a series of photographic pieces, primarily to challenge my ability to explicitly implement semiotic understanding. Whilst the drawings portray the patient/visitor experience in the waiting area, it felt important to connect this work with the hospital staff, both clinical and administrative, creating a visual and symbolic link with the care and treatment they provide. In each photograph, a drawing from ‘Waiting’ is held by a staff member; some clearly wearing generic hospital uniforms, others in their own clothing. By depicting a cross section of staff, the individual clothing/accessories reveal subtle suggestions of their varying professional roles, from surgeons to nurses and receptionists to porters. Selected at random, they were given identical instructions – to hold the drawing at chest height, in order that the final collection of images could be effectively displayed together in a linear, uniform fashion. In each case, there are identifiable symbols of professional roles and the hospital context can be visually interpreted in various ways. Obvious, clinical signifiers such as stethoscopes, NHS lanyards, insignia, recognisable nursing uniforms and scrubs feature alongside more subtle symbols such as barcoded security passes, pens in pockets and even the mouse on the receptionist’s desk.

I made a conscious decision to crop the staff member's faces out of the images, immediately drawing focus towards the figurative drawing now placed centrally in the composition. Without identifiable faces, the images also speak more of the symbolic role of the caregiver, rather than the individual. The 'holder' of each drawing effectively becomes a physical image-framing device, their body and hands enveloping and surrounding the figure portrayed within the drawing. Despite representing the original drawings from the 'Waiting' series, the narrative created by this photographic sub-series is unique. It felt appropriate to create a separate title for the collection, 'In Safe Hands' to best communicate its distinct message.



NHS insignia, uniform design and colour, identity card and even pocket pens, all serve to create a greater understanding of a hospital / medical context, similar to the 'Italianness' discussed by Barthes in 'Rhetoric of the Image' (1964).

Please note: the photographs were taken with special permission from NHS Cumberland Infirmary. All consents are held on record.

DRAWING & PHOTOGRAPHY

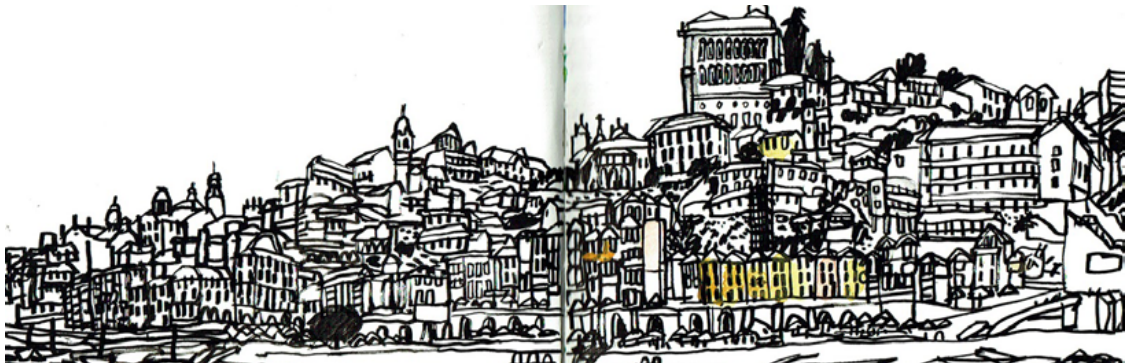
Whilst I was unable to utilise reference imagery for ‘Waiting’, photography nonetheless became a key component of the work’s overall success (see ‘In Safe Hands’). Typically though it’s an ‘either-or’ situation when discussing Drawn V Photographic reportage and the ongoing debate regarding their respective abilities and merits commonly divides people into clear factions. It is important however, to consider the reasons illustration CAN play a significant role despite photography being easier to access and more apparently able to ‘accurately’ depict a scene or a moment.

My own opinion on the subject are summed up in this quote from journalist, author and reportage illustrator, James Hobbs:

“The relationship that develops with a drawn subject isn’t like taking a quick photograph and then studying it closely later to see what has come out; drawing takes time and needs a connection to be made between the artist and the subject for it to really succeed.”

(Hobbs, 2013)

Hobbs suggests that the act of observing, followed by a drawn response, bonds the artist to their subject matter. An illustrated account presents both a depiction of a subject/scene AND an aspect of the artist as a direct result of the drawing process. Although a photographer can alter lighting and/or perspective to establish a mood or feeling, due to the freedom of their materials and actions, an illustrator can produce a more natural and individually personal response. The illustrator is more able to represent their experiences, feelings and personality alongside other tangible elements and it is therefore my feeling that this important difference lends unique values to reportage illustration that cannot be claimed by photography.



*James Hobbs
from ‘5 Days in Porto’ (2018)
specialising in complex urban scenes,
Hobbs’ process lends his work a
distinctly frenetic energy that appears
at odds with the contextual accuracy
provided by his drawing.
www.james-hobbs.co.uk*

PROCESS

As discussed previously, the logistics of developing the 'Waiting' project were initially complex. Efforts to gain access to wards, medical spaces and patients (in order to create visual interviews) were thwarted by cautious hospital management. Additionally, there was lack of clear bureaucratic processes or administrative frameworks regarding accessing clinical areas/patients for artistic purposes, raising issues of consent and concerns regarding health & safety. Whilst in theory I had the full support and backing of the hospital and the relevant staff, in practice it proved impossible within the timeframe to satisfy all concerns raised. Patient consent proved to be the greatest stumbling block and while the hospital had a clear process in place in order to assess a patient's ability to give medical consent, no such system existed for the patient's consent to be drawn, interviewed and to have the results widely shared.

A frustratingly long portion of time on this project was spent in confronting these issues and it was perhaps no coincidence that during this period, I experienced a 'creative block'. The drawing process felt like an incredibly arduous and unsatisfying task; an unpleasant means to an end rather than enjoyable expression. With the benefit of hindsight, it seems apparent that the faltering nature of my project was manifesting directly on the pages of my sketchbook. Eventually there came a point where I was unlikely to complete the project within the provided timeframe and as a result, I called an end to the ward access negotiations. The moment I changed the perspective of the project's aims, the creative block dissolved and I was immediately able to confidently draw again.

The waiting area of the hospital had two potential benefits as a focus of the project – it is a public space so therefore consent was no longer a moot point and it featured a never-ending supply of subject matter. Whilst drawing in the waiting area removed the 'interview' aspect, its accessible nature allowed me to begin drawing immediately. Relevant management were consulted of my amended project proposal and permission to go ahead was finally and much more easily granted.

The practicalities of drawing in the waiting area were straight-forward and a collection of drawings began to form. I aimed to remain a distant observer of my subjects and not impose on them or make my actions known. I also avoided subjects who appeared to be in physical or emotional distress or who gave me reason to believe that they could be uncomfortable about being drawn (this consideration raises an array of questions and considerations for further research).

OUTCOME

Despite, or perhaps because of, the difficulties present at the outset of this project, I feel very satisfied by the outcome of 'Waiting'. I managed to confront, address and better manage the creative issues raised in previous projects e.g. use of reference imagery and challenging academic approaches to drawing. As such, 'Waiting' represents my truest attempt at honest reportage illustration. In previous projects, I was more able to manipulate and orchestrate circumstances which added elements of contrived fiction to my visual reports but in contrast, the drawings extracted from 'Waiting' represent circumstances as they truly appeared to me.

The drawings I produced (almost 100, over a short period of time) were created quickly, loosely and crucially- 'on site', allowing me to create a steady flow of responsive and 'honest' work. The speed of my drawing allowed me to focus on the work overall without over-thinking or critiquing specific individual pieces and I feel this approach worked well to communicate the narrative of a shared human experience. Like Grosz's work in *Ecce Homo*, I feel 'Waiting' is most effective when viewed and considered as a collection. Overall, the body of work presents a strong sense of the introspection and trepidation evident in and characteristic of the hospital waiting area.



*Selected drawings from 'Waiting'.
Presented here in a compendium book
format for exhibition purposes.
For more examples follow this [link](#)*

In addition to the drawn outcomes, a sub-series of work 'In Safe Hands' utilises photography to enhance its collective narrative, continuing my ongoing exploration of ways in which reportage work might be shared. Compiling books, creating animations and incorporating audio/spoken word have all successfully increased my potential to communicate and share reportage through new channels of expression. By using photography not only to depict the subject but also the contextual realities of the hospital waiting area and staff, 'In Safe Hands' provides two perspectives within one image. The background (photographic portrait element) perspective is a purely representative account. The second drawn perspective features the artist's experience of the subject. Fueled by this integration of perspectives, 'In Safe Hands' provides a multi-faceted presentation of the patient journey, waiting experience and creative process. As previously discussed, the perceived conflict between reportage photography and illustration appears to demand a definitive answer which champions one approach whilst discrediting the other. In combining them in this series, I have taken steps toward exploring a duality which potentially increases the scope of traditional reportage illustration.



Examples from 'In Safe Hands' showing NHS staff members holding depictions of members of the public, drawn in the waiting area of Cumberland Infirmary.

Upon sharing both *Waiting & In Safe Hands*, (The Vallum Gallery exhibition, Aug – Sep 2018), it was gratifying to hear people connect the work with their own experiences of hospital waiting areas and to recognize familiar feelings and emotions in the drawings presented. One elderly lady hoped that the work might prompt NHS staff to consider how difficult the waiting experience can be from a patient or visitor perspective. Indeed, staff are so used to passing through the waiting area that they risk becoming immune to the potential anxiety that may seem obvious to non-staff. I was particularly heartened by this comment as both Healing Arts and I had targeted this potentially valuable outcome. In the coming months, we will work together to create an exhibition of the work within the hospital and it would be satisfying to think that we could provide this much needed perspective.



A section of 'Waiting' on display at The Vallum Gallery, The University of Cumbria Institute of The Arts, 2018.

EXHIBITION

Through exhibiting the collected work, I aimed to create a relatable sense of the waiting area's atmosphere via the content of the work and also, importantly, its presentation. The drawings and photographs rely upon the viewer's own experience to provide understanding and narrative, so it seemed logical that the presentation of the work should tap into the viewer's ability to provide their own context.

Through specific presentation choices, e.g. identifiably 'NHS coloured' (in this case an acidic yellow) chairs loaned from the hospital waiting area, signage featuring the font 'Frutiger Bold' (commonly used in NHS), wall mounted hand sanitizer and the inclusion of dated and well-worn magazines, I aimed to tap into the sense memories of visitors, providing them with contextual understanding and empathy that would inform their appreciation and both conscious and semiotic understandings or interpretations of the work.

The creation of this exhibition represents further explorations of methods of dissemination; indeed, it could be argued that instead of a traditional exhibition, I've created an installation piece that utilises drawing and photography. In practical terms, positive responses and feedback suggest that I have been successful in bridging the gap between the audience's own experiences and the work that I've created.



A section of 'Waiting' on display at The Vallum Gallery, The University of Cumbria Institute of The Arts, 2018.

SIGNIFICANCE

Inclusion of the arts into the daily operations at Cumberland Infirmary is in its infancy. Many practical and/or ethical questions will need to be addressed before harmonious integration is achieved and the clear role of the artist clarified, understood and accommodated by all. This is not a criticism but simply a statement of fact based on my experience.

Whilst we were unable to align hospital operations with our creative conceptual ambitions, it's a fair conclusion that these attempts can be positively viewed as a necessary kick-start to the integration process. We may not have found clear conclusions but we have certainly played a key role in identifying pertinent issues whilst raising the hospital management's awareness of the on-going incorporation of art within the hospital's environment.

Healing Arts co-ordinator, Susie Tate:

“Healing Arts is a charity which works within the infirmary, but is not an NHS body and does not receive NHS funding. As such the introduction of art and art practice into the hospital is very much about developing a manageable, harmonious partnership and a shared language between arts and health sectors. Both sides are striving to satisfy their own agenda whilst trying to accommodate that of the other. Understandably, there are stumbling blocks but with each project we learn and broaden our understanding. ‘Waiting’ has helped to identify issues which we can now begin to address. By sharing our experiences with other similar arts organisations, we can increase the rate of shared learning and create suitable systems which can then be widely adopted. ‘Waiting’, like many other projects across the U.K will play a part in building that structure”.

The work from 'Waiting' will be exhibited at Cumbria Infirmary soon and whilst I'll be unable to simply transfer the Vallum Gallery exhibition to the hospital as is, our shared aim (Healing Arts and I) has become the creation of a separate 'waiting experience' within the existing hospital waiting area, with the aim to provide its audience with a sense of empathy and awareness. A longer-term aim is for the exhibition to provoke a broad discussion around the potential creation of a preferable, empathetic hospital waiting experience. The notion of my work playing a small part in achieving such a profoundly positive outcome makes the project and my efforts feel very worthwhile indeed.



*Drawing on location.
Cumberland Infirmary, July 2018.*

JM3M

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