

The Environment as Portraiture

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Attestation of Authorship

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by any other person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award for any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning."


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Signed

11/06/2015
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Date

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Abstract

This project focuses on how a personal narrative can be communicated through a subject's personal space. Illustration and collage are used to reflect aspects of the personal narrative of a number of different subjects. Central to my research is an exploration of ways to create a portrait and the accompanying narrative without having the literal figure of the subject as a part of the artwork. The resulting portraits aim to evoke curiosity and interaction between viewer and artwork, creating the opportunity for new narratives to be made through the act of viewing. Practice-led research is the overarching methodology throughout all stages of the project, with reflection-in-action and tacit knowledge also employed during the process.

Introduction



Figure 1 *'EARLY PORTRAIT OF SUBJECT #1'*

Bronte Pullar
(2014)



Figure 2 *'EARLY PORTRAIT OF SUBJECT #4'*

Bronte Pullar
(2014)



Figure 3 *'PORTRAIT OF SUBJECT #1'*

Bronte Pullar
(2015)

The nature of my research is to reveal personal narrative and idiosyncrasies about each subject through my own interpretive artwork. At the beginning of the research, I experimented with illustrations that included the sitter as subject matter (Fig 1 and 2). I later changed my approach to the portraits by removing the sitter from the image (Fig 3). Deliberately leaving the figure out forces the viewer to create their own story about the subject. This posed the challenge of how to portray aspects about the sitter such as gender, age, and personality without following a traditional portrait structure.

I interviewed each of the different subjects and documented photographs of objects in their personal spaces, whether it was their bedrooms, workrooms or the interior spaces of their homes. Through a dialogue with each of the subjects, it was possible to unravel some of the meanings behind different items in their homes and develop more of a sense of their character than if just viewing the space alone. The personal stories and observations made about each subject provided scope for creative exploration through illustration and collage techniques.

By researching and exploring different techniques such as abstraction, symbolism and metaphor and applying as such to my subject matter, the works became more conceptual and harder for the viewer to decode. However, though more challenging, when gaps are left in a narrative the viewer is forced to determine, to engineer and overlay their own interpretation of the story, and in turn create new narratives and new meanings.

In the first chapter of this exegesis, I discuss the context of my research, including notions of the art portrait, metaphor in art, and how art history has influenced my work, focussing particularly on the work of Henri Matisse and David Hockney. The second chapter explains the methods and approaches to both the practical and theoretical research of the project. In the third and final chapter, I discuss the practical work in various stages from the collecting of information to the idea generation and, lastly, how the artworks were composed.

This thesis is constituted as practice-based work (80%), accompanied by an exegesis (20%).

Chapter One:

CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

“A bedroom is like an oyster—though sealed off to the public by its shell, when opened, a bedroom can reveal the pearls of its inhabitants.” (Orlow, 2013)

The inspiration for this research project was motivated by an interest in ways that personalities and personal stories can be visually communicated within an artwork. These personalities and narratives can provide the potential for creative exploration. I interviewed different subjects and sought to portray my own interpretation of their character; using space as a visual metaphor for them. Colour, perspective, line techniques, pattern and domestic subject matter are explored throughout the project to represent each subject.

Art Portrait

Although not dealing with aspects of conventional portraiture, which employs the sitter as the main subject matter, it was necessary to research the history of portraiture to gain knowledge of techniques and terms used to discuss art portraits and the ways subjects can be represented in artwork.

Traditionally, the subjects of art portraits were those with particular importance, social standing or wealth in society. *"Our statesmen, generals, captains of industry, authors, ladies of fashion, hung within eyeshot of historic eminences of all degrees, and even of forgotten royalties"* (Ross, 1904). The portraiture of these people being often used as symbols of status; the attainment of higher social standing or class; a clear message to all of the sitters importance and their achievements/power, in relation to the viewer.

It was an important part of the project to ensure that the portraits were layered, meaning that they not only portrayed what is well known about each subject, but also aspects of their personality that are personal and not so obvious. This meant I had to filter through the gathered information about each sitter and choose which aspects held the most potential for further development, using my own intuition to guide this process. The aim being to convey to the viewer that it is the humanistic quality of the aspects that makes the work interesting and relatable, and consequently, *"there are two elements-the sight of the physical shapes which the artist copies as he makes a study from life, and his interpretation of the mind of the character of the subject."* (Le Guin, 1983, p. 335.)

For the purpose of this research, the definition of a 'portrait' refers to a series of objects acting as symbols for the subject, creating a narrative for who they are.

Metaphor in Art

As one of the key aspects of my project is to create a portrait about a person without the actual sitter as subject matter, the resulting artworks are a form of metaphor for the character of the subjects. This visual metaphor is portrayed through the use of omission¹, juxtaposition, and inference.

Parsons explains a metaphor in terms of having a primary and secondary subject, where the metaphor *“maps some of the qualities of the secondary subject onto the primary one.”* (Parsons, 2010, p. 229). He gives the example ‘*Museums are the graveyard of art*’ to explain how a metaphor can be understood. The two subjects of this metaphor are museums (primary) and graveyards (secondary);

“In this example, when we ask what the metaphor says about museums, we must decide which of the qualities of graveyards are to be mapped onto museums.

- Graveyards contain dead bodies. Mapping this onto museums suggests the meaning: museums contain dead works of art, not live and vibrant ones.
- Graveyards give careful information notices of the names and dates of the bodies.
- Graveyards are solemn and boring places.

But there are some properties of graveyards that are irrelevant in this metaphor in most contexts:

- Graveyards don’t have seats for visitors to sit on.
- The dominant colours in graveyards are green (the grass) and grey (the tombstones).” (Parsons, 2010)

Although this is an example of a linguistic metaphor, my project aims to apply in regards to visual metaphor. To paraphrase Feinstein (1985), a linguistic or visual symbol can be either one thing that stands for another thing, or one that stands for other things. It is through those symbols that we suggest and identify meanings. Feinstein also notes *“in contrast to literal meaning, metaphoric meaning subsumes literal meaning and connotes. A metaphoric symbol, therefore, stands in one-to-many correspondence with its referent and is not necessarily the same for everyone; opposite and contradictory meanings can be derived from the same symbol.”* (Feinstein, 1985, p.27.)

¹

‘Omission’ refers to deliberately leaving the sitter out of the artwork, encouraging the viewer to understand the portrait through the interpretation of clues, based on the definition in the Oxford Dictionary, ‘someone or something that has been left out or excluded.’

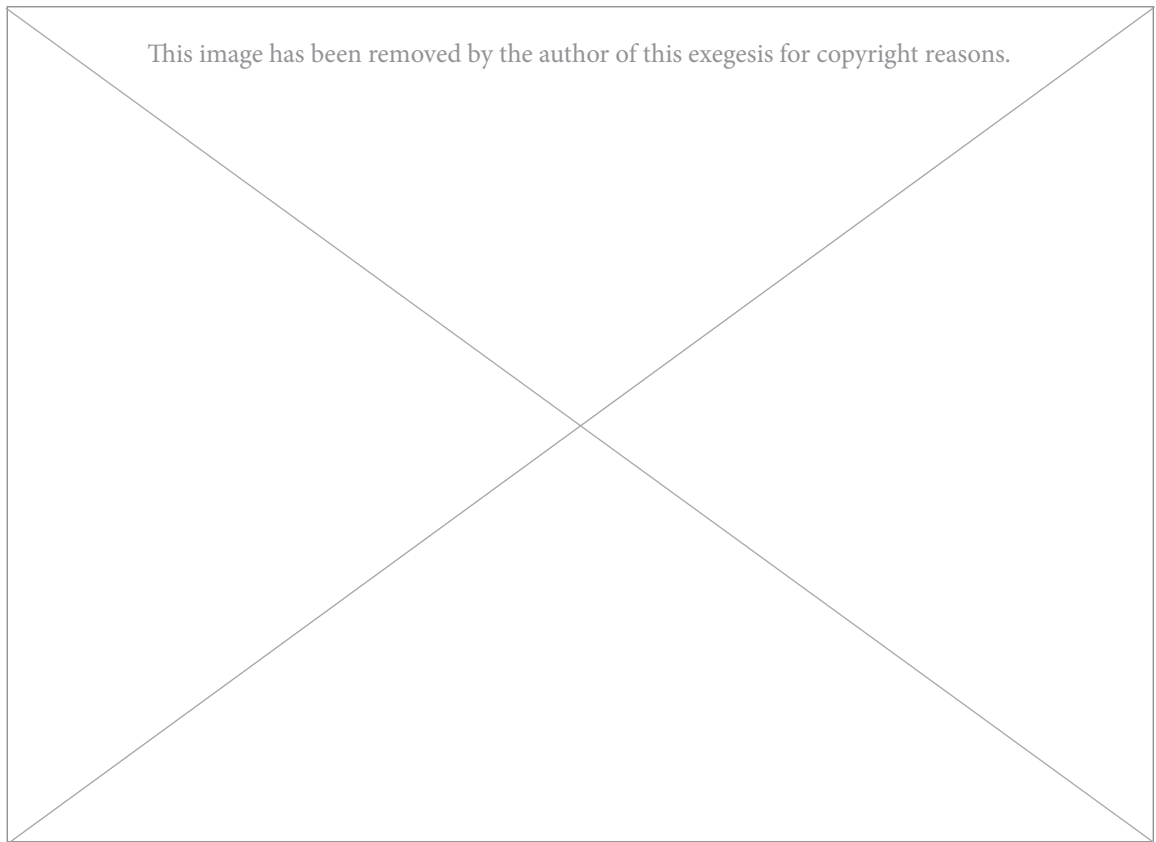


Figure 4 *'A SUNDAY ON LA GRANDE JATTE'*

Georges Seurat
(1884)

Both Parsons (2010) and Feinstein (1985) acknowledge the kind of metaphor interpreted by the viewer relies on the cultural knowledge of the viewer.² Parsons analyses this example, *'A Sunday on La Grande Jatte'* (Fig 4) in terms of how it could be interpreted. The figures are seen as stiff, and he explains that one interpretation could be that they are modeled on classical figures, in particular from the traditions of the old Roman Republic. Interpreted this way, the metaphor is citizens of Paris are ancient Romans: that is, they are "*admirable, upright, virtuous models of citizenship in a Republic.*" (Parsons, 2010, p. 231). The viewer must already have previously learnt knowledge of the ancient Romans for this metaphor to work, and the reading is culturally dependent.

2. I understand that the viewer will often see or interpret an image differently to how the artist originally intended it to be read, "*either because they bring experiences and associations to a particular image that were not anticipated by its producer, or because the meanings they derive are informed by the context (or setting) in which an image is seen*" (Sturken, M & Cartwright, L. (2001). p. 46).

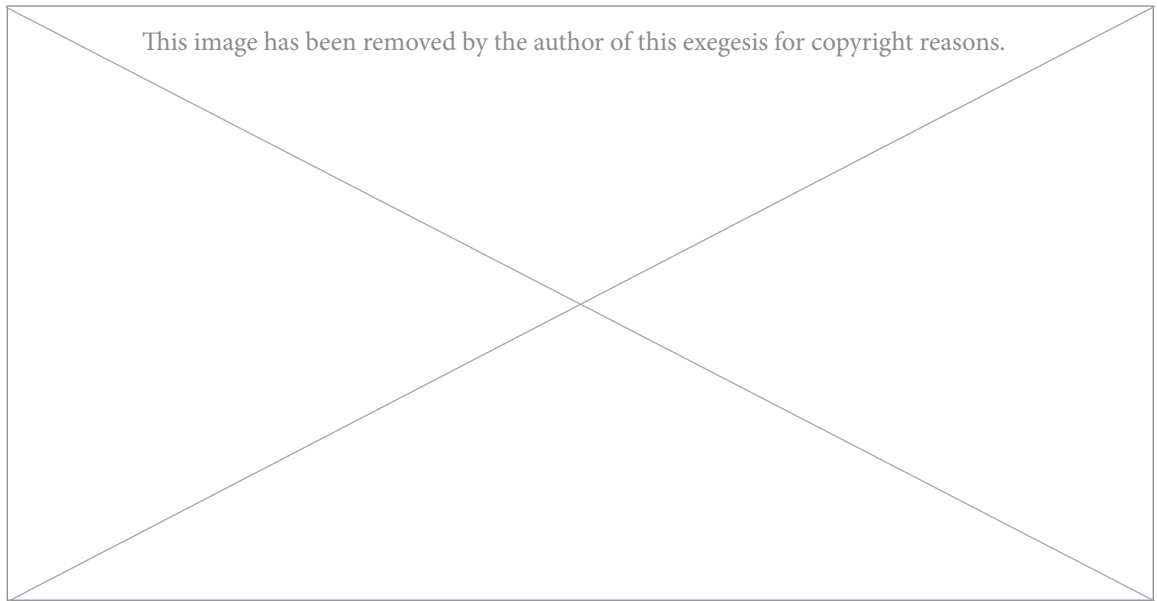


Figure 5 *'MY BED'*

Tracey Emin
(1998)

Tracey Emin

'My Bed' (Fig 5) depicts a personal narrative about a certain time in her life. Similarities between this installation and my own project can be drawn when contemplating the meaning and reading of the piece. Taking herself out of the artwork but leaving behind her personal space gives the viewer clues about her personality and also her life at the time. Each particular object will retain a different inference, and this will vary depending on who is viewing the piece. This artwork is powerful due to the fact that it is relatable, many of the viewers would have had a similar experience of having a low point and staying in bed for an extended period of time. Emin herself believes her work is more about the feeling or emotional value and relatability of the piece rather than what is actually shown. (*Tracey Emin in Confidence*, Interview, 2013)

Using the terminology discussed previously, the metaphor for this work could be *'my bed is pain/struggle/a breakdown'* with the primary subject of the artwork being the bed used as the vehicle to deliver the secondary subject, that being the emotions associated with pain/struggle/a breakdown. Some of the qualities of the secondary subject are mapped onto the primary, for example the unmade condition of the bed, the mess surrounding it, the chaotic nature of the scene and the vodka bottle are all clues to personal pain/struggle/breakdown.

Having the physical objects of the bedroom installed could be seen as a more obvious portrayal of a personal narrative than when compared to my approach to the artwork. Instead of showing the objects third dimension, I have taken shapes and textures found in each of the subjects surroundings, and translated these into two dimensional illustrations of space. These shapes, colours, textures and the composition of each image directly relates to my interpretation of the personality of each of the subjects.

Modernism, Abstraction and Flatness

The nature of my artwork resembles the aesthetic qualities found historically in modern art, *“the history of modern painting was understood to involve the gradual elimination of all illusion of three dimension, combined with an increasing emphasis on the flatness of the picture plane.”* (Melia, P & Luckhardt, U. 1994, p. 57). Within this art movement, a common theme is that the ideas and images within the artworks are often the artist’s own representation, rather than showing a realistic and obvious depiction to the viewer. These artists may convey a certain theme or idea by leaving parts of the narrative out or by including symbolism, juxtaposition or inference in ways such as composition, form or colour/tone.

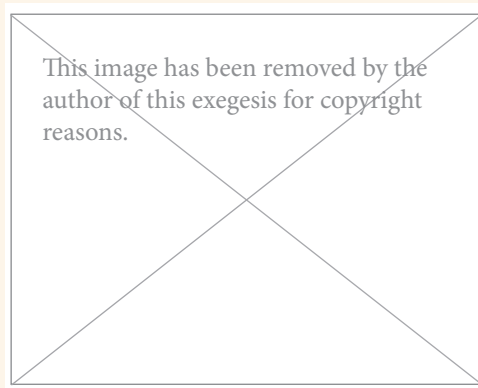


Figure 6 *'BEDROOM AT ARLES'*

Vincent van Gogh
(1889)

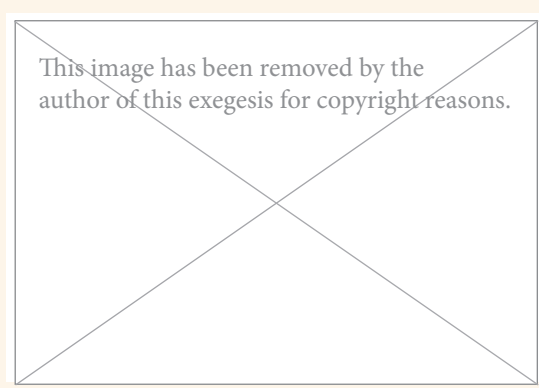


Figure 7 *'BEDROOM AT ARLES'*

Roy Lichtenstein
(1992)

The modernist aesthetic can be clearly articulated when comparing these two artworks of the same name *'Bedroom in Arles'*, originally a painting of the artists bedroom by Vincent van Gogh in 1889 (Fig 6), then later reproduced by Roy Lichtenstein in 1992 (Fig 7). Lichtenstein’s humorous interpretation of Van Gogh’s original painting gives new meaning to the bedroom, updating the original work with contemporary chairs and replacing the casual shirt with businessmen’s white shirts. *“Using Ben-Day dots and updates in colour and furniture, Lichtensteins version changes the sombre tone of the room to a modernist studio room”* (Orlow, 2013). While each version contains the same basic layout and subject matter, Lichtenstein’s version, through the use of abstraction, colour and flatness, has a starkly different meaning and feel, in my opinion.

In a similar way, I have composed my own artwork using a combination of flat and detailed space to highlight certain areas and leave other parts more ambiguous. In this section of *'Longing: Subject #2'* (Fig 8), I have made the most detailed part of the image the curtains, in order to give this part of the image more significance.

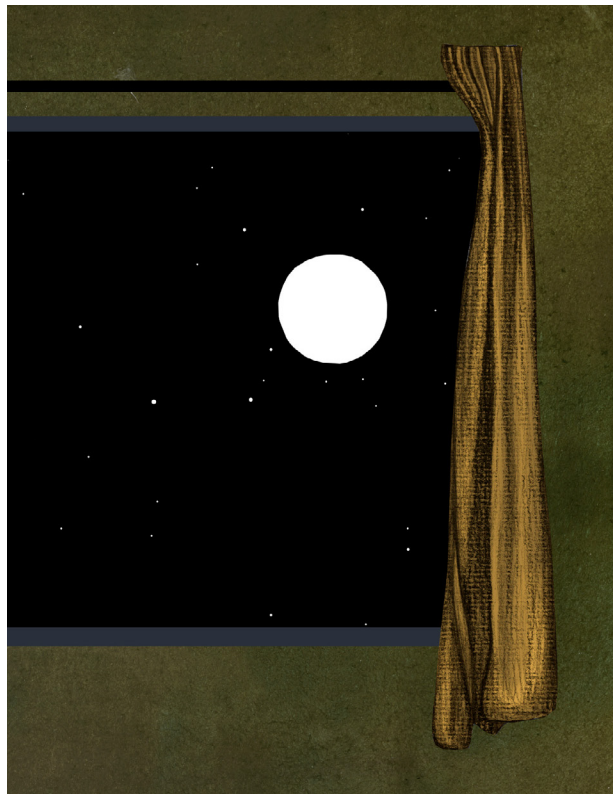


Figure 8 *SECTION OF 'LONGING: SUBJECT #2'*

Bronte Pullar
(2014)

The following two artists, Henri Matisse and David Hockney, have been important to my research and have influenced the stylistic qualities of my artwork;

Henri Matisse

Henri Matisse influenced my work in terms of colour and also his use of the cut-out technique, a distinguishing feature in his later artworks.

“Henri Matisse’s art highlights the Modernist preoccupation with fantastic colour, flattened space and luxurious forms. His forms are balanced against cautious and sensuous lines to create an aesthetic which reflects the Modernist preoccupation with emotional representation rather than mimesis.” (Clarke, 2010 p.10)

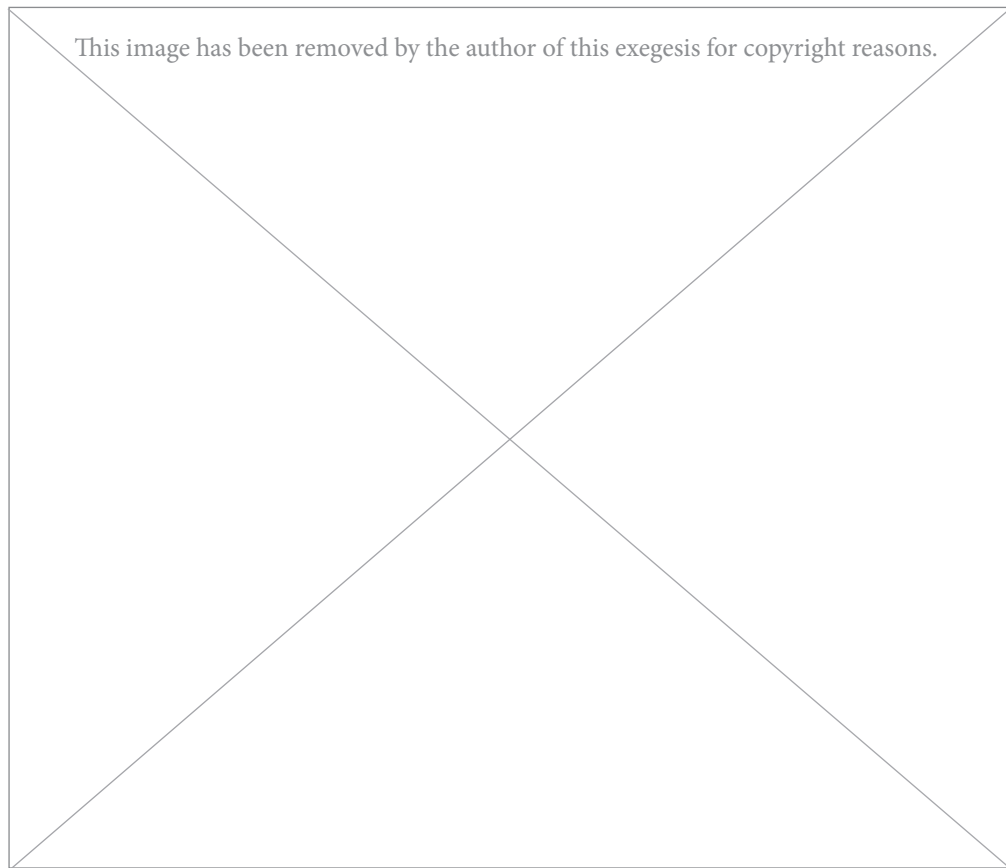


Figure 9 'L'ATELIER ROUGE'
Henri Matisse
(1911)

'*L'Atelier Rouge*' (1911), also known as '*The Red Studio*' (Fig 9), illustrates the modernist approach to art-making, where expression is more important than representation. Instead of accurate depictions of life, Matisse uses expressionistic abstract forms of colour and 'emotionally-loaded' brushstrokes to portray his interior.

A signature of Matisse's style, and what he is most well-known for, is his vibrant and bold use of colour. "*Matisse was able to gain a greater understanding of how colour heightens and controls composition by adopting a range of techniques from various movements.*" (Clarke, 2010, p. 11) Colour plays a major role in how an image is read), as shown in the comparison of Figures 6 and 7 previously), so choosing the correct colours and tones for each portrait was an important part of my process. In my artwork, I experimented with unnatural colour and spaces in a similar way to Matisse. When constructing the images, more importance was placed on the expressive and emotional quality of the work than depicting life and images in a realistic way.

David Hockney

Both Hockney and Matisse share similar approach with regards to space and the compositing of the subjects in the frame. David Hockney has influenced my work with regards to his use of stylistic features to influence the reading of the image. Melia and Luckhardt discuss this in *'David Hockney: Paintings'* (2000):

Hockney discusses this painting in terms of the selectivity of human vision: *"When you walk into a room you don't notice everything at once and, depending on your taste, there is a descending order in which you observe things. I assume alcoholics notice the booze first, or claustrophobics the height of the ceiling, and so on. Consequently, I deliberately ignored the walls and I didn't paint the floor or anything I considered wasn't important."* (Melia, P & Luckhardt, U, 2000, p. 46.)

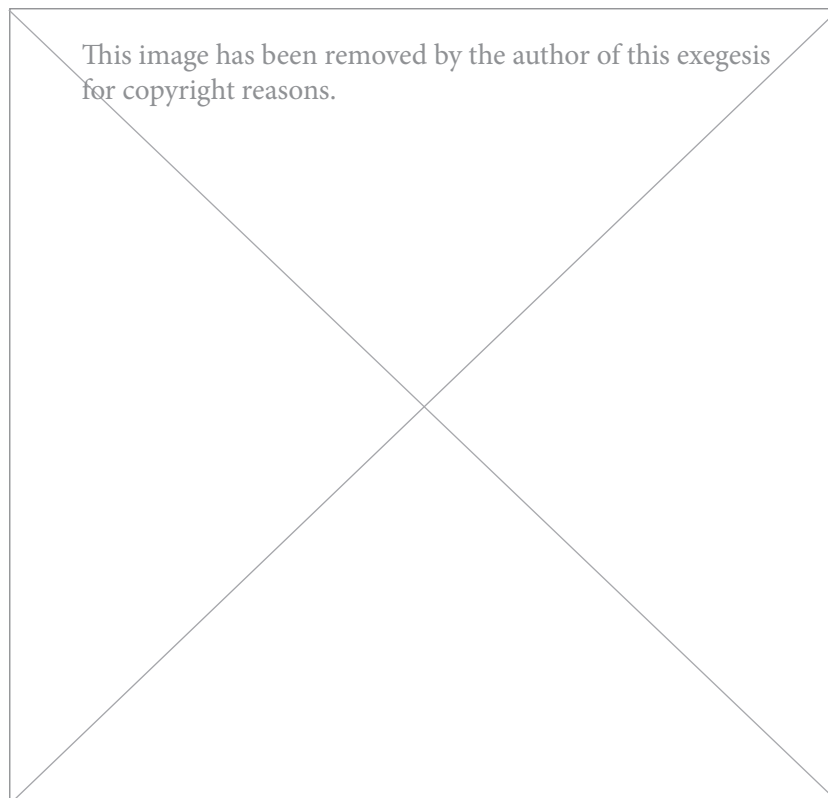


Figure 10 *'STILL LIFE WITH FIGURE AND CURTAIN'*

David Hockney
(1963)

Seen here in *'Still Life with Figure and Curtain'* (Fig 10), Hockney chose to give more emphasis and personality to the curtain, as he saw it as *'the most important thing'*. Hockney explains how if he had painted the figure with personality it would have become the focus. Reducing the figure to a simple form (similar to an old-fashioned skittle or bowling pin) makes the curtain and still life appear more "real". (Friedman, 1983)

In my experiments the reading of the artwork is quite directed, giving more emphasis to certain parts, so the interplay between detailed illustrations and abstracted forms was a technique that I used to achieve this.

In Hockney's theatre paintings, what action there is takes place in a box-like area. *"Though he used frontal, or one point perspective to define the walls that contain these little events, their settings, nevertheless, are ambiguous. They take place in some no-man's-land between reality and theatrical illusion. In using the stage metaphor, fact and fantasy dissolve into one another, and ordinary events take on mythic connotations."* (Friedman, 1983, p. 22.)

Collage and Juxtaposition

The definition of collage in regards to much of my own artwork differs from that of twentieth-century collage art in general. In a similar way to Matisse (Fig 11), I employed the ‘cut-out’ technique to easily make changes in the structure of the artwork until it represented the metaphor in the intended manner.

“These paper cut-outs have their very pure existence, although they escape from your hands, from your scissors. Their paper matter with the fine play of the light on their flexibility, the physical aspect of this flexibility, all combine to make something miraculous which loses its essence when it is placed flat.” (Finsen, 2005, p. 211).

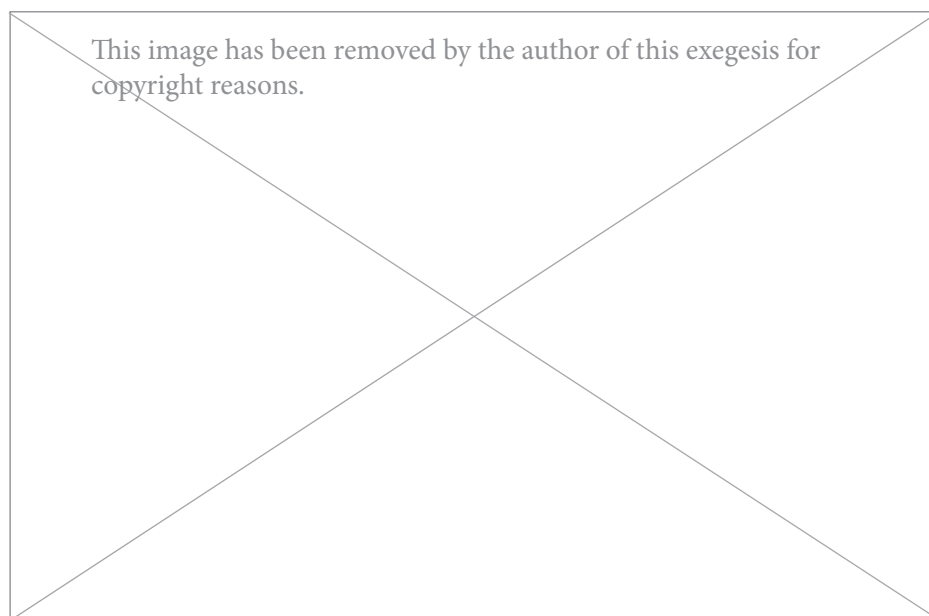


Figure 11 *JAZZ, PLATE XI, LES CODOMAS*

Henri Matisse
(1944)

Waldman writes of Matisse’s technique compared to traditional collage artists:

“A major ambition of many of his colleagues was the renovation of imagery using nontraditional means, such as the found object or readymade, the preexisting image, texture, material, or word, which, in combination with others of its type, would take on a new and enhanced meaning. Matisse, on the other hand, was concerned with the meaning of color and shape rather than with the significance of disparate fragments juxtaposed in random order. He cut out his shapes from sheets of paper painted with gouache.” (Waldman, 1992, p. 194)

The collage technique allowed me to bring together materials that signified the characters individuality as an extension of illustration alone. The portraits incorporate a range of different materials allowing the viewer to *"see both, the mark and the scene that the mark was bringing into being, the two joined together, as it were. Meaning you were deeply aware of the surface, which paradoxically then added to the illusion of spatial depth"* (Welschler, 2008). From far away the viewer observes the image as a whole, however on closer inspection starts to notice the image as layered. The objective of layering is that the viewer tries to work out how the image is constructed. The image purposefully evokes curiosity and an interaction between viewer and artwork. *"Rediscovering the long familiar and seeing what someone else has made of it is an attraction for the viewers"* (Gestalten, 2013). My aim was to present the viewer with images that incorporate both physical depth and illusionary planes of depth; forcing the viewer to switch between these two ways of looking at the image.

A surrealistic technique explored in my project is the juxtaposition of objects, to incite the viewer to draw relations between the objects and to come up with their own interpretation of the piece. As humans, we seek conclusiveness and try to decipher meaning in that which is unclear or incomprehensible, *"...our attempt, as viewers, to read what is in its essence unreadable merely fills the deliberate absence of a decipherable code within meaning that we both invent and unravel"* (Manguel, 2002, p. 37).

Chapter Two:

METHODOLOGY

After exploring a range of different methodologies applicable to the field of art and design, I was able to locate the three that worked best for me in my own practice. Practice-led research, reflection-in-action and tacit knowledge were the three overarching methodologies that facilitated reflection and direction throughout the different stages of the project.

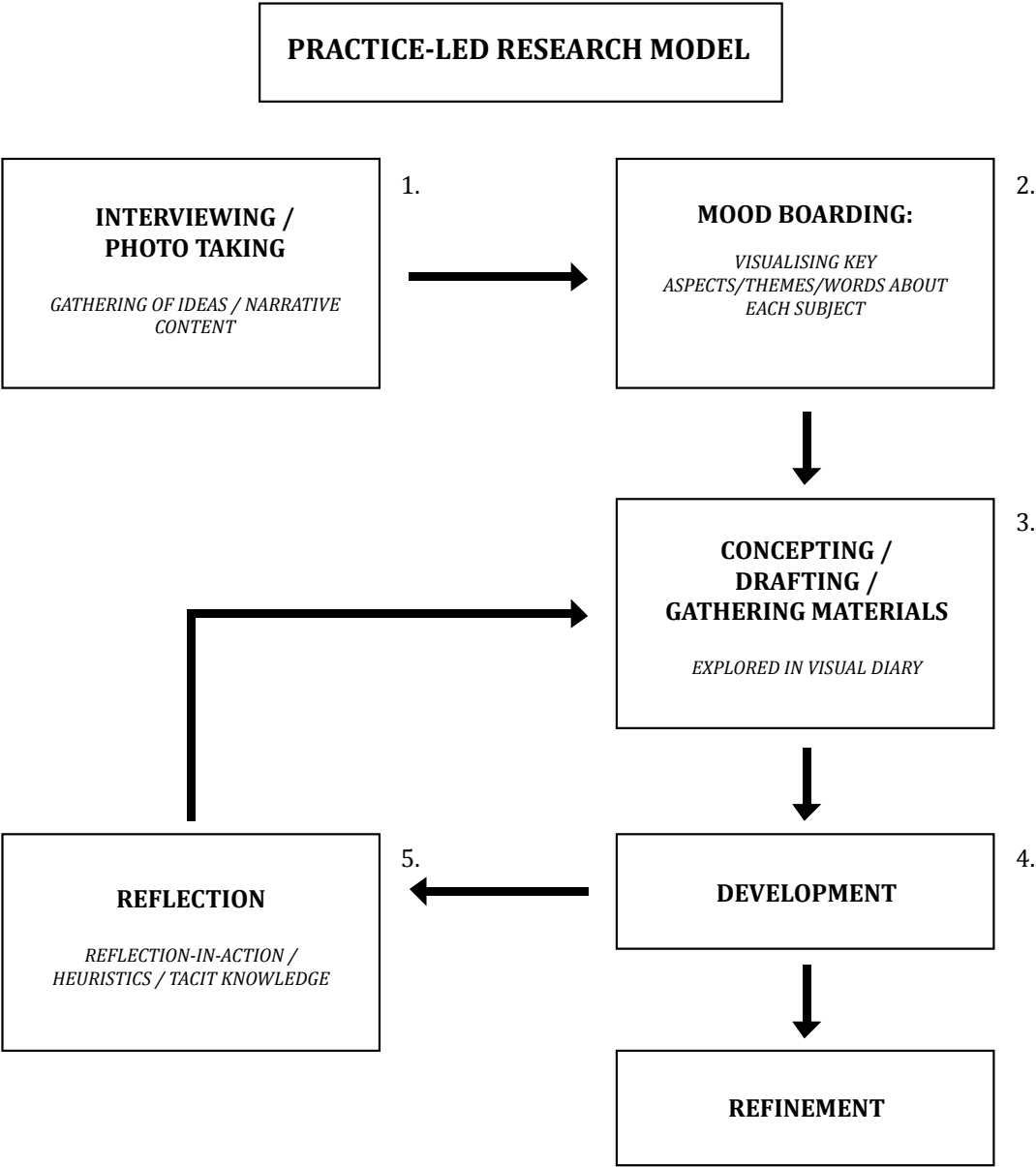


Figure 12 'PRACTICE-LED RESEARCH MODEL'

Bronte Pullar
(2015)

Practice-led Research

Since the practical research is predominantly based on developing a theory through practice, this project employs practice-led research as the overarching methodology. I can find similarities with my approach to research and that described as 'Action-Research' in the writings of Cal Swann. Swann (2002) defines action research as a cyclic means of approaching a task, involving six key stages; problem/research, analysis, synthesis, execution, production, evaluation. Throughout my project it was important to re-evaluate and reflect on what was working and what needed to be improved during all stages of the creative research process, from the initial selection of the subject to the completion of the artwork. After reflecting it became possible to fix problems and shift the creative direction of the project where needed. The 'Practice-led Research Model' (Fig 12) clearly shows this cyclic approach.

Reflection-in-action

In *'The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think In Action'* (1983), reflection-in-action is described as being a key phase in any design process. Schön (1983) describes two types of reflection: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Reflection-in-action is the reasoning and purposeful actions undertaken to guide the direction of movement through the task. I employed this methodology when it came to constructing the collages, as one example. I would have different shapes and colours of cut-out paper and have to arrange them in different positions until I was happy with the composition. This approach can also be seen as heuristic³, where I rely on my own intuitive judgement.

Tacit Knowledge

Tacit knowledge can be described as what we know but cannot convey why. In *'The Tacit Dimension'* (1966), Polanyi explains his theory about intuitive thought processes assumed during the design process and how these play an important part in decision-making. As a creative person, personal judgment is a vital part of the creative process. Throughout the project, numerous subconscious decisions were made that guided the direction of the work without any real logical reasoning. I employed my own tacit knowledge, which could have been taken from previous experiences or research, and this aided the ideas and practical development throughout.

2. The word heuristic comes from the Greek word, *heuretikos*, literally meaning "I find," and is related to the famous expression "eureka." (Douglas, 1985)

Visual Diary



Figure 13 VISUAL DIARY PAGES: *SUBJECT #1*

Bronte Pullar
(2014)

Throughout the project I kept a visual diary of illustrations, imagery and collected materials as a visual reference that informed a relevant aesthetic approach and helped ideas to surface. By collecting a range of material from the subjects in both physical and photographic form, I could then identify possibilities for narrative content and translate these into illustrations or collages. It was important to experiment with different approaches to the practical work using artist models as reference to guide productivity. The fluidity and non-final nature of the visual diary was beneficial for rapid creative development. With little pressure being on making a 'final image' I was able to make mistakes and change the direction of the practical work using my own intuition and reflection-in-action, as discussed earlier.

Mood Boards and Idea Generation



Figure 14 MOOD BOARD: *SUBJECT #3*

Bronte Pullar
(2014)

Throughout the project I kept a visual diary of illustrations, imagery and collected materials as a visual reference that informed a relevant aesthetic approach and helped ideas to surface. By collecting a range of material from the subjects in both physical and photographic form, I could then identify possibilities for narrative content and translate these into illustrations or collages. It was important to experiment with different approaches to the practical work using artist models as reference to guide productivity. The fluidity and non-final nature of the visual diary was beneficial for rapid creative development. With little pressure being on making a 'final image' I was able to make mistakes and change the direction of the practical work using my own intuition and reflection-in-action, as discussed earlier in Chapter Two.

Chapter Three:

THE PRACTICE

The Subjects and Collecting Information

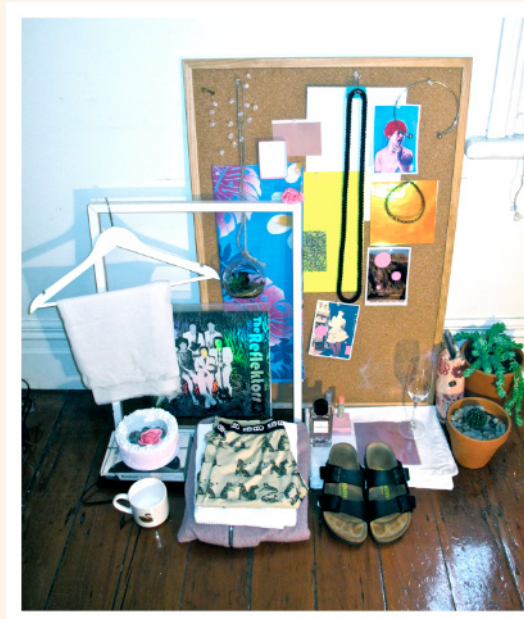


Figure 15 IMAGE: *SUBJECT #1*

Bronte Pullar
(2014)



Figure 16 IMAGES: *SUBJECT #2*

Bronte Pullar
(2014)



Figure 17 IMAGES: *SUBJECT #3*

Bronte Pullar
(2014)



Figure 18 IMAGES: *SUBJECT #4*
Bronte Pullar
(2014)

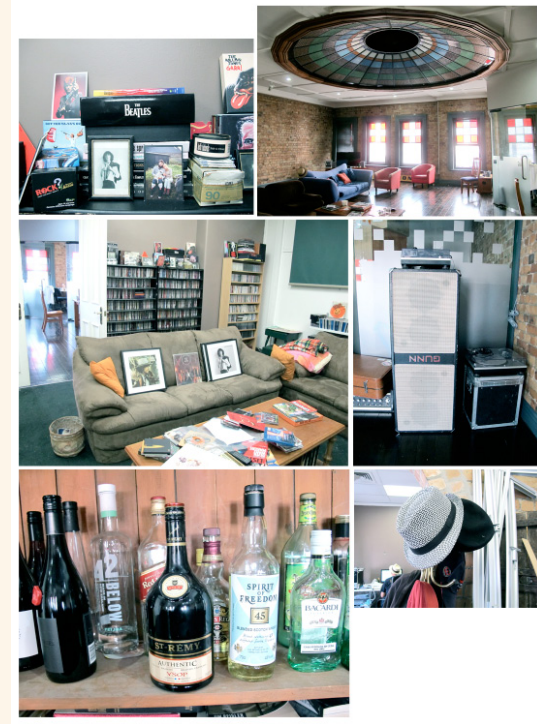


Figure 19 IMAGES: *SUBJECT #5*
Bronte Pullar
(2015)

The names of the subjects have not been disclosed in order to create an element of trust, enabling each subject to reveal stories, habits, secrets or other personal information not obvious or necessarily known about them. Also, this avoids hinting to characteristics of the person such as gender or ethnicity, creating a greater sense of mystery for the viewers when trying to decode the portraits. The resulting works are five final portraits, using five different subjects throughout the course of this Masters year.

Photographic Reference

The first part of the process was to select a subject and take photos of their interior spaces (Figures 15 to 19) While in their homes I was able to develop more of a sense of their character and draw relations between their objects or belongings and how these can convey personal narratives. The above photographic images are examples of personal items found in each of the five subjects homes, and these were used as inspiration for the illustrated works.

When choosing the subjects, I made sure to think ahead to what their final portrait could look like, and also how it would compare to the other four in a gallery setting. I wanted the final five artworks to clearly portray five vastly different personalities, so when viewed together one could get a sense of perhaps who has a loud or vibrant personality and who is more subtle in nature.

Composing the Artworks

Using the methods discussed in the previous two chapters, this section will discuss the practical research and experimentation. In this section I will discuss the techniques, both physical in regards to stylistic features and also the process of constructing an intended meaning within the artwork through the use of symbolism and layout.

Objecthood, Symbolism and Personal Narrative

"Each work of art has a specific meaning, a symbolic content. This meaning is vested on the other in colors, lines, and shapes utilized." (Gottlieb, 1964)

My work attempts to guide the observer through the use of signs and symbols to convey aspects of the omitted sitter to the viewer. This is achieved by using elements of the portrait as communication signposts, gestures to the sitters life and experiences, symbols of who they are and what it is that has meaning and potentially, important to them. Using the sitters environment only as a communication; a form of language and gesture of guidance to the viewer.



Figure 20 OBJECTS OF YESTERYEAR: SUBJECT #2

Bronte Pullar
(2015)

One aspect explored was the objects of nostalgia within the bedroom of Subject #2 (Fig 20 and photographic references in Fig 16). It was an interesting aspect that distinguished this subject from the others. Although it is common to keep items from yesteryear, the amount of childhood objects on display in the subject's room suggested that he wanted to hang on to the memories of the past. From a dialogue with the sitter, he explained that he had a 'picture perfect' childhood, with many fond memories growing up in a small town in France. The passage of time affects the objects it leaves behind, and the sentimentality the sitter holds for these items from his childhood was something I used as inspiration for this experiment.

My project aims to use block colours to represent the childlike quality of these items. The objective is to abstract the objects, to replicate the experience of memories, how certain parts of memory are very clear and other parts can be fragmented.

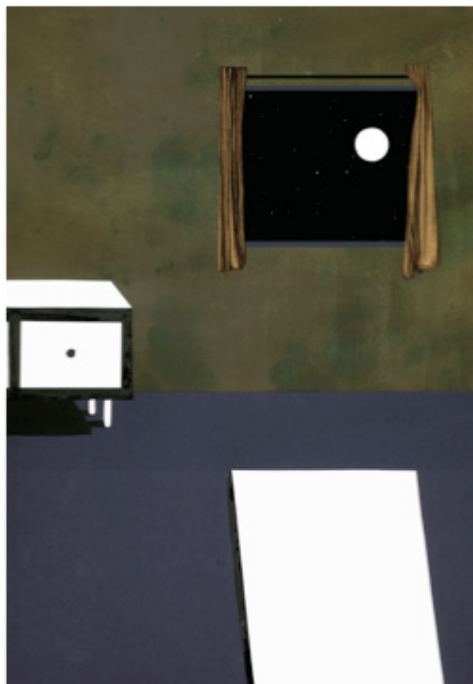


Figure 21 LONGING: SUBJECT #2

Bronte Pullar

(2014)

This experiment (Fig 21), symbolises another characteristic observed of Subject #2. It represents a childlike wonder, and is a reference to one of his favourite movies, *E.T.* using the moon to draw a link to this. He stated that he is always looking at the stars and wants to go 'exploring' but does not have the time to with his busy schedule. This subject works

as a colour grader on films, and also has a fascination with technology, spending most of the time looking at a computer screen. The intended meaning in this image was the idea that although spending most of his time inside, nature and the outdoors is what he feels he regrettably misses out on. It is intended to show a contrast between the interior and exterior. Having the most detailed part being the curtains (refer to Fig 8 for a close-up view), as in Hockney's *'Still Life with Figure and Curtain'* (1963), draws the eye from the interior plane to the window and what is outside. The wall was painted using natural colours and the desk was made to look plain and utilitarian, as if it were a work desk. The simplicity and dull nature of the interior space adds to the appeal of the exterior space.

Colour, Tone and Mood

Subject #1 collects various shiny and brightly coloured objects, ranging from pots to items of clothing (photographic reference seen in Fig. 15). As a twin, she had always felt the need to 'stand out' or create a sense of individuality that separated her from her sister. She achieved this by the quirky clothes she wore, always known to be a 'trend setter.' The subject's boldness was a feature that was explored visually. In the following experiments, the scenes were comprised using a mixture of coloured/holographic paper and also with a material that was found in her room (Fig 22).



Figure 22 EXPERIMENTATION WITH COLOUR/MATERIALS: SUBJECT #1

Bronte Pullar
(2014)

Conclusion

Within this research project, I experimented with ways to portray an intended narrative or personality for a chosen sitter. My aim was to encourage the viewer to decode the meaning of the artwork through abstraction of form, inference and juxtaposition. Keeping in mind that one of the shortcomings of the practical work could be that a viewer with little or no knowledge of the reading of art may not understand the intention of the work, I understand that each viewer will interpret each piece in a different way due to their own cultural upbringing and knowledge, therefore the point of the artwork is not to portray a definitive meaning but more to leave the interpretation open. When viewing the different pieces in a gallery setting, the intention will be that each piece will contrast to the others, as each of the subjects has a different personality. My research outcome objective is for the viewer to question what sort of person the artwork attempts to describe; who he or she might be and what sort of persona they might have from an intellectual point of view while connecting, or not, with each of them from an emotional perspective.

Further Research

Over the course of the last two years or so I have become increasingly interested in the ways that art interacts with and is interpreted by peoples of different cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds and levels of education; particularly where art requires the viewer's interpretation and exploration of content. It seems to me that artists such as Matisse and Hockney, invite, and in some instances force the viewer to draw upon their cultural conscious ingraining and educational overlays in order to weave a narrative of the sitter/owner/occupier of the space - into the representational space the art portrays. In other words, to bring the psychology of the viewer; in an object relationship sense if you will, to the objects inherited into the two dimensional representation of a three dimensional space.

In this sense the art, that in some small way I have created and seek to extend, attempts to ask a deeper question – as the observer, what is the meaning of this piece and as the owner of the moment in time I am spending in observing this art, what clues is it trying to convey and what if anything is the artist asking of me. As the observer how can I know and know of the absent sitter and what experiential cultural/psychological artefacts is my consciousness imprinting on absent person.

Realistically and for most people, what is presented will be of curiosity value only, but for others it may extend curiosity into enquiry. It is this boundary; this juncture in the process whereby the observer moves from passive to interactive that may represent further research opportunities.

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BY BRONTE PULLAR





