

Presented in this book is
the documentation of the
work produced during 1982-
1984 within the Master of
Fine Arts course at the
Tasmanian School of Art
University of Tasmania.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Loris Button". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Loris" and the last name "Button" clearly distinguishable.

Loris Button

BOOK NUMBER 3

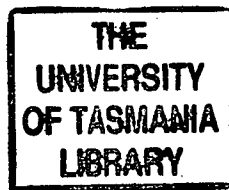
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Thesis

BUTTON

M.F.A.

1985

vol. 1



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the staff of the Tasmanian School of Art and my family for their continued help and support throughout the course. Very special thanks are due to my fellow candidates, who gave so willingly of their time, and without whom a large part of this work could not have existed.

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STUDY AND WORK DETAILS

1951 Born Melbourne

Study Details

1975-79 Diploma of Art, Preston Institute of
 Technology

1981 M.F.A. Preliminary Year, Tasmanian School
 of Art, University of Tasmania

1982-84 M.F.A. Candidate, Tasmanian School of Art,
 University of Tasmania.

Solo Exhibitions

May 1983 Avago-in-Hobart, Anzart-in-Hobart

August 1983 Avago, Sydney

Dec. 1984 M.F.A. Examination Exhibition, Tasmanian
 School of Art Gallery

Group Exhibitions

1979 100 Artists, Pram Factory, Melbourne

1980 Button & Caddy: paintings and drawings,
 2 person show, Latrobe Union Gallery,
 Latrobe University

1982 Detours by Tender Aliens, Womens Art
 Festival, Hobart

1984 Ah Tissue, works on hand-made paper,
 Tasmanian School of Art Gallery.

Collections

Phillip (ex Preston) Institute of Technology

Awards

1983 Special Projects Grant. Tasmanian Arts
Advisory Board

Curator

1983 Maria Kozic & → ↑ →, Tasmanian School of Art
Gallery

Publications

'Provincialism and Art' by Jonathan Holmes, Island
Magazine No.14

'Avago-in-Obart, Anzart's Shop Window' by David
Watt, Island Magazine No.16 (Anzart Supplement)

PROPOSAL 1982/84

The central part of my proposal is essentially an assessment of my past work - a necessary approach as I usually work without a very clear-cut plan in mind. Each piece is generated by, and developed from the ones that have gone before, and is therefore part of a natural progression.

However, before I begin that assessment there are a number of points which need clarification at this stage. The question of whether my work is a deliberate feminist/political statement has been put to me on various occasions. My viewpoint must be obvious because my work is about documenting my life, however, there is no intention to be political involved. There is also my obsession with heads which I have concentrated on almost exclusively. I rely heavily on family and friends for my subjects, finding it impossible to produce paintings of any tangible truth when working with strangers. I find heads endlessly fascinating and ever-changing - my subjects are my victims - used as raw material to make statements about myself. Making art is a self-indulgent enterprise and therefore my fairly ruthless approach is necessary for me to convey any truth or sincerity.

In the past four years I've produced what I now regard as four major pieces of work. I must define the word major, in using this I mean that they have triggered new thoughts/methods etc., and are the basis from which my present work originates.

The first one 'Self Portrait 1978-80' was, as indicated in the title, painted over a period of two years by adding images at irregular times. My idea was to paint a face often enough so that it became thoroughly familiar to me and therefore to the viewer, i.e. to produce a work

exposing some of the many sides of one personality. I was, and still am convinced that my work needs to be personally relevant to have any validity and the result remains one of the most powerful and confronting images I have ever produced. Every head I have painted since that time has owed an enormous amount to the insight gained making that work. Although painting directly from the model has become a less obsessive part of my work, I still regard it as a necessary path back to reality and will certainly produce a number of these paintings over the next three years.

The second major work was painted in 1980 over approximately a twelve month period. 'Family Snapshots 1943-80' was the first of my historical paintings and precisely as the name suggests, is a number of small paintings of black and white snaps from my family photograph box. It has directly generated two other historical works - 'Studio Portrait' also 1980, and an as yet untitled piece, painted last year dealing with my marriage. I find the device of using photographs to re-create a past era fascinating and will use similar methods to produce what has become an established form of memorial for me. I intend to produce a piece dealing with the birth of my daughter, but, as always with these historical works, need a bit more distance from the event to enable me to deal with it.

The third work, which I consider to be a major piece, is the series of ten 'Self-masks' which were produced in my preliminary year by using moulded paper in a cast of my own face. They are painted and sewn, I've used glitter, glass eyes, ribbons and sequins - some are obviously aspects of me, and some, (more covertly so), are very theatrical. An exaggeration of my theory of people putting on disguises as protection; they stemmed from the necessity to use myself as a model once more - however, having already produced a number of straight self-portraits I found myself fairly reluctant to embark on another large series, although an occasional one is still

essential for documentation. This series provides me with a basis for further extension of this theme. I have also produced a number of mask paintings - in the past I have always worked at stripping away the layers of protection through painting multiple portraits of my models. I began to think that it would be a more revealing exercise to start putting these layers back onto the exposed head, therefore creating an unmasking by stating the masks. This obsession also provides me with a topic for my seminar. I plan to research the usage and history of the mask in ritual and theatre with a view to discovering at least a little about why it is, and always has been, such a powerful and evocative device.

The fourth major piece is the first of a number of diaries which I've kept for the past few years. Each one has consisted of making a notation in colour of my moods and feelings for each day of the year. I now feel that it is time for the format to change and plan to make larger single pieces which will deal with a longer period of time - they will probably incorporate all sorts of scraps from my day to day existence - photos, letters, lists etc., and be sewn, painted, collaged and waxed. Some will become collections of memorabilia which could be separately handled by the onlooker.

My year in Tasmania has changed my work dramatically - the pieces I produced are very much a reflection of my general feeling of isolation - they have a closed-in, claustrophobic air and the colour has become quite heavy and oppressive. The factors which contributed to this will continue to exert a very strong influence on me, as will the new experience of motherhood.

Time and events always impose unforeseen changes in my work and attitudes, so therefore this résumé of my intended work programme is not meant to be proscriptive, however, it gives as clear an indication as possible of my current objectives.



Cooper, the Kid and Me

1982/83 65x104cm

acrylic, acetate stencil and photographs on paper

REVIEW OF PROPOSAL

Upon re-reading my proposal it has become apparent that the major change in my approach is in relation to the statement I made about painting from the figure. Far from being 'less obsessive', it has become an almost totally overriding concern in the work produced during the last two years.

I doubt that I am any kinder to my sitters, and certainly some of them would agree that I am not; however, it remains an approach upon which I will not compromise. My one concession is to make sure that prospective subjects are well aware of the content of my previous work, and so are forewarned of their fate.

I remain a committed feminist and continue to think that those sensibilities are apparent in all the work.

During the first year I did to some degree follow the approaches outlined in the proposal, discarding in the end all but the portraits. While much of the exploratory work has not been included in the exhibition and has not been continued, the false trails did yield some very valuable information and insights.



Elizabeth 1982 (series of six)

1982 30x30cm each

acrylic, photostats and encaustic wax on canvas



Naked Child - Summer 1984
1984 103x35cm
acrylic on hand-moulded paper

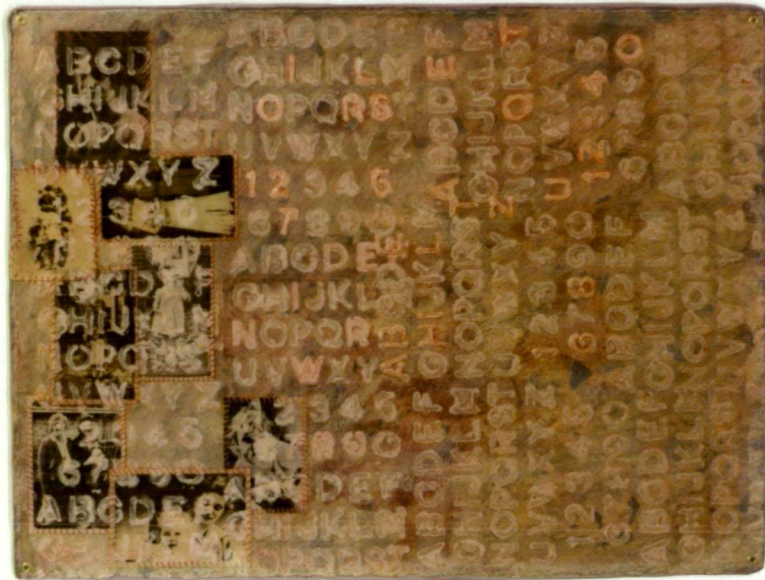
1982 WORKS

The birth of my daughter in November of 1981 and my subsequent residence with my parents for a period of four months were the experiences which generated the work produced in 1982. Whilst I was already aware of the well documented notion of the symbiotic union which exists between mothers and babies, it was not until I experienced this as a lived reality that the phenomenon had any **real** meaning for me.

The physical separation of mother and child is in fact a much more gradual affair than the act of birth would seem to suggest. That initial delusion of a common boundary is only slowly dissolved as the child learns to distinguish its own body from that of its mother. But the letting go is not just a one-sided affair. The very real physical and emotional ties - that close union with this other human being - is only relinquished with difficulty, over a considerable period of time.

There remains in my memory a sense of unreality about this time, a feeling that I was not wholly myself, that my individuality was subsumed by the mental and physical demands made necessary by the responsibilities that care and nurturing of my child entailed.

It was during the gradual lessening of this symbiosis that I painted the series of six portraits of my daughter ('Elizabeth 1982') and with hindsight, it is apparent that they are a clear indication of how our relationship changed over the five months in which they were completed. In May of 1984 I again painted Elizabeth ('Naked Child, Summer 1984') and in this work her growing independence and confidence in her individuality are strikingly evident when compared with the earlier series.



Mothers and Daughters

1982 58x76cm

acrylic, photostats and encaustic wax on paper

The stay in my parents house was also a strong influence on the 1982 work. My altered status as a mother, changed quite radically my relationship with my own mother and caused me to look with renewed interest at my maternal grandmother's ten year residence in our house while my sisters and I were children. Lynne Tillman in her essay 'The Mother, the Space of Ambivalence' says that

'A woman identifies with her own mother and, through an identification with her child, she (re)experiences herself as a cared-for child. Between mothers and their female children this identification is multiplied, doubled.'

My own experience crosses four generations of the women of my family. It was this new perspective on our interdependent relationships that led me to paint 'Mothers and their Daughters' and 'Winifred Byrne Loomes'.

The hermetic introspection of the work completed in 1982 can be accounted for by the almost total self-absorption that was an inevitable result of having the complete care and responsibility of a young baby. I am, two years hence, able to look back and see that this period, whilst an essential part of that experience was also necessarily of limited duration. 'Cooper, the Kid and Me' 1982/3, marks not only the end of my solitary parenting, but is also, the painting which triggered in me a new and important interest in formal figure/ground relationships.



Portrait of Loris Button (The Candidates series)

1983 110x83cm

acrylic and photographs on hand-moulded paper

'THE CANDIDATES' SERIES

At the beginning of 1983 I was very much aware of a need to produce some work of a less insular nature, and at that time began to contemplate the beginning of what has become the large series entitled 'The Candidates'.

Since coming to Hobart I had felt quite strongly a very particular sense of isolation, comprised of both physical and emotional states of being. This isolation compounded by the size of the community in general, and the art community in particular, combined with the fairly unique types of experiences that all M.F.A. candidates undergo, has tended to engender a much closer degree of intimacy and interdependence than would otherwise have existed in any group of such diverse personalities and interests.

I began to see that here, was an almost certainly unique opportunity to obtain access to a fairly large number of people, who, whilst not otherwise connected, had a considerable tie to each other via the mutual experiences of isolation and pressure that I contend, are the formative elements of this particular group.

For reasons which I have dealt with more fully in the 'Portraiture' section, I am concerned to make very particular reference to time and place, I want the images of these people to be specific and firmly connected to the particular social group in which their production took place.

Lucien Goldmann in 'Subject and Object in the Human Sciences' says that

'The artist can begin to imagine a vision of society only from within it. Thus, he (she) determines and reveals the epoch in the very act of transcending the immediacy around him (her). The flight of the



Portrait of Helen Taylor (The Candidates series)

1983 110x83cm

acrylic, acetate stencil and photographs
on hand-moulded paper

artist's vision is defined by the objective possibility of his (her) position within a given culture.'

In attempting to portray the group from within, I am well aware that since its status and the relationships within and without it are constantly in a state of flux, it is not possible for me to achieve a coherent objective understanding of its structure. However, it is precisely the specificity of this highly subjective view that I am concerned to portray.

To this end I have followed a certain set of ground rules in the execution of this series. Each person is painted without hair, and it is this device which has, with no exceptions been questioned by all those who have looked at the work. Hair is a sign used as a disguise, it is also the signifier that by its quantity, quality, colour and cut denotes sex, gender, class and age. The removal of that signifier necessitates that the viewer look harder at the image and think more clearly about what is perceived. To remove the means of disguise determines that there is more to look at, more revealed.

They each provided me with an object or image that is currently important to them. I have interpreted this information, and when the ground is complete, then paint in the figure with the specific intention of creating a very particular spatial relationship between figure and ground. As additional notes each painting has a photographic image of the sitter and some written information, also supplied by the subject. By giving my subjects the choice of imagery and information with which they are associated, I have attempted to give to each a degree of control and responsibility in the production of their own image.

I have sought to make the paintings work on a variety of formal, painterly and ideological levels of meaning, using deliberately difficult juxtapositions of imagery. Those that are most successful also work as a unitary whole.



Portrait of David Watt (The Candidates series)

1984 110x83cm

acrylic, colour photostats and photograph
on hand-moulded paper

'EXCISIONAL BIOPSY 1983'

This painting is generally regarded as the most powerful image that I have produced to date. For me it is an extraordinarily difficult image to live with, as it deals primarily with my reaction to, and exorcism of, what was essentially a horrifying experience. The horror remains, the threat of breast cancer - that most feared of women's diseases, will remain with me for the rest of my life.

The painting is also intended as my contribution to the arguments which surround traditions of representation, dealt with in my paper on portraiture. It is intended as a statement about the expectations placed upon representations of female nudes - my body begins to show signs of ageing, of having born a child, and is now, disfigured by scarring.



Excisional Biopsy 1983 (self-portrait)

1983 110x83cm

acrylic and plastic name tag on hand-moulded paper

MATERIALS

The most notable change in my use of materials has come about through having access to the Jabberwock Paper Mill. The majority of the work completed in Hobart has been on the hand-moulded paper, which I have produced in the mill from cotton rags. This process enables me to exercise a degree of control over the surface upon which I work that was not previously available to me. It is a superbly malleable medium with an exciting surface to paint upon, one that allows for a rich and luscious paint finish. I am able to peel back sections of my imagery, to cut it out and to cast it. The paper is self-supporting and so transcends the difficulties associated with the hanging and showing of works painted onto commercially produced papers.

I have experimented with the use of encaustic wax painting, using it chiefly as a means of encasing and preserving photographic and photostat images.

I have already mentioned that a good deal of the work includes photographic images. This is a device which I have employed for some time, however, it has increasingly been used to make a conscious reference to the different levels of meaning and amounts of information afforded by photographic and painted images. It is essential to make clear the fact that the photographs I use are not intended to stand as images on their own - they are intentionally snapshots, meant to be read in context with the other information incorporated into the paintings.



Portrait of Janice Hunter (The Candidates series)

1984 118x90cm

acrylic and photograph on hand-moulded
and cast paper

Seminar One

M.F.A. ART THEORY PROGRAMME 1983

ON CONTEMPORARY PORTRAITURE

Part One

A History of the Painted Portrait

In my initial reading for this paper was John Berger's article 'The Changing View of Man in the Portrait'. In this I came upon a very reputable source for a line of thinking that in the past I had dismissed as arrant nonsense. Berger says:

'It seems to me unlikely that any important portraits will ever be painted again. Portraits that is to say in the sense of portraiture as we now understand it.'
(Berger 1972, p.35).'

As a portraitist, such a view coming from a theorist of Berger's stature, held very serious implications for the validity of the way in which I practice my art. This premise, so far from my own stance, was quite obviously , one for which I badly needed to find some sort of answer.

He goes on to say that :

'The function of portrait painting was to underwrite and idealize a chosen social role of the sitter.
... we ignore that function if we concentrate on the small number of **unprofessional** portraits.' (Ibid. p.37)

and that:

'It seems that the demands of modern vision are incompatible with the singularity of viewpoint which is the pre-requisite for a **static** painted 'likenes'.'
(Ibid. p.41) (my emphasis).

What I wish to take issue with and to redefine, is our understanding of the term 'portraiture', and what it **does** mean in the late twentieth century.



Fig.1

Federigo da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino (circa 1465)

Piero della Francesca



Fig.2

Self-portrait (1498)

Albrecht Dürer

The Shorter Oxford Dictionary defines

'portrait as ... (now almost always) a likeness of a person especially of the face, made from life by drawing, painting, photography etc.'

The Encyclopedia Britannica says

'a portrait is a record of certain aspects of a particular human being as seen by another. The sitter may be deified or merely flattered by the painter, satirized or even maligned, but as long as some sense of individuality remains, a painting of an individual will be a portrait.'

Both of these reputable sources of knowledge give very broad interpretations of what can be defined as a portrait. So where in fact, does Berger's far more rigid criterion originate. It is perhaps pertinent to note at this point, that amongst writers who address themselves to this field of painting, there are many who tend to hold to a similar point of view. The answer, to some extent, lies in the history of the painted portrait. Because of its very nature, the portrait is prevalent only in those periods of history primarily interested in human beings as individuals.

It first came to prominence as a genre during the Renaissance, the period when humanity discovered itself. This is the period associated with the beginnings of capitalism in the city states of Italy. (See Fig 1). Individuals began to amass property and wealth, to realise that they had a certain amount of control over their own destiny, and to begin to readjust their relationship to themselves and to God. The cult of the hero, which had begun to emerge in the middle-ages, was developed in the Renaissance and the recording of individual virtues became one of the motive forces for portraiture.

The artists of this time, who were occupying positions as courtiers rather than artisans, did not efface themselves before their sitters as had their predecessors; they made them conform to their particular

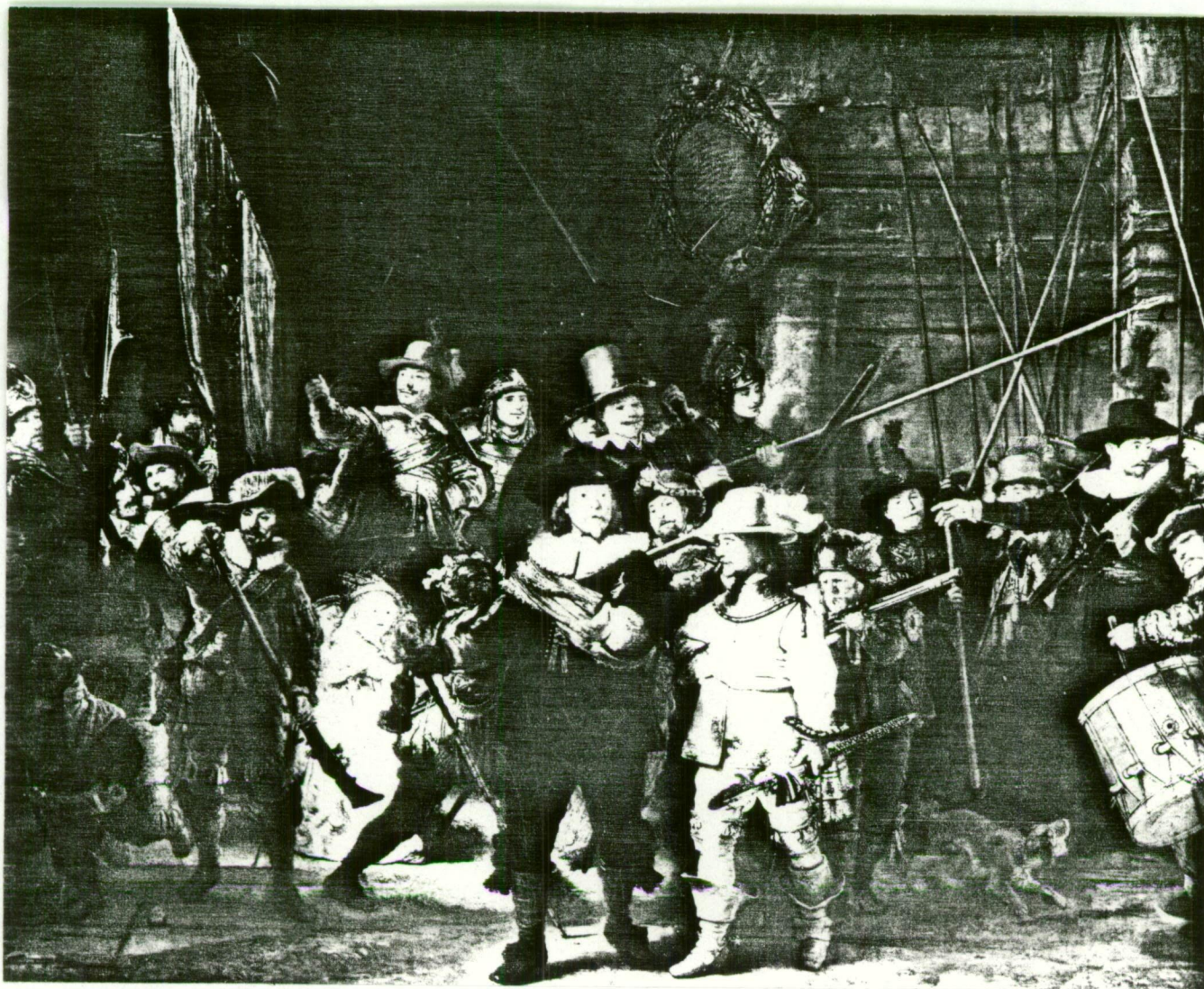


Fig.3 The Night Watch (The Militia Company of Captain Banning Cocq) (1642)
Rembrandt vab Rijn



Fig.4

Self-portrait (circa 1660)

Rembrandt van Rijn

ideals. (See Fig.2). The increasing importance of their role encouraged artists to paint portraits of themselves and to impose their own preoccupations in some way upon their portraits of other people.

The seventeenth century in the Netherlands saw the merchant class become prosperous and influential triggering a heightened interest in portraiture. It was at this time that the guild-piece grew to prominence, the group portrait which served as a symbol of membership both for the individual within the group, and for the group towards a more general social strata. (See Fig.3)

Rembrandt and his contemporaries of the Baroque period have left us with many outstanding individual portraits. These artists were interested in portraying an illusion of the total man, revealed in a moment of contact. Perhaps Berger's 'singularity of viewpoint' was then a possibility. (See Fig.4)

The style of Berger's '**professional**' portrait can be traced back to Van Dyck (1599-1641) and the type of aristocratic portrait he helped to evolve. (See Fig.5)

'The whole figure in broad perspective plane, taking in the spacious seignorial surroundings, the face relatively small, at a remove from the beholder. One feels oneself very much in the presence of a lady or gentleman who stands on a social eminence and gazes down on the looker: the impression of class outweighs the impression of individuality. Cultivated poise regulated by convention limits personal utterance' (Friedlander, 1963).

Van Dyck brought this tradition of the courtly portrait from 16th century Venice to England, where it remained as a convention until the end of the 18th century, and indeed, is still the yardstick of acceptability for the majority of the 'commissioned' portraits.



Fig.5

Charles I à la ciasse (1635)

Sir Anthoine Van Dyck

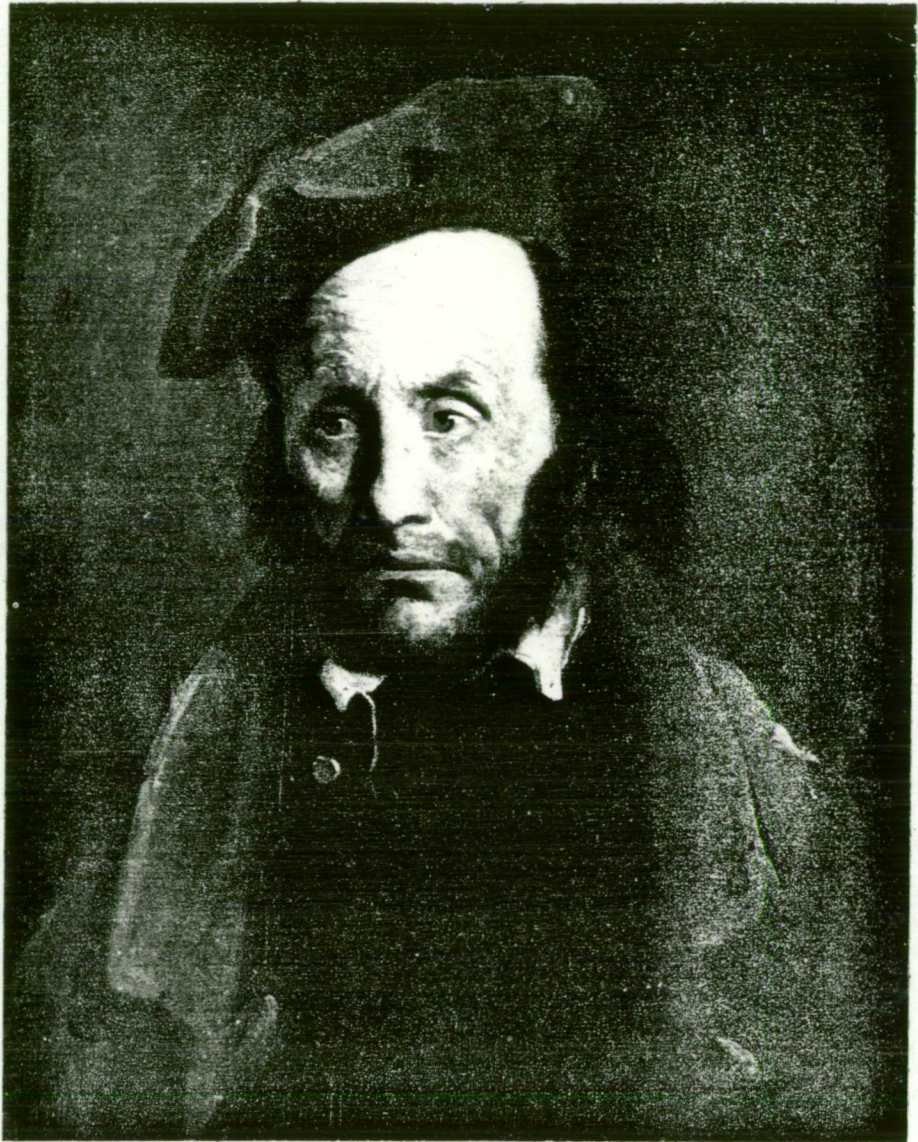


Fig.6

The Insane Man

Theodore Gericault

Berger says that:

'... the moment when the decline of portraiture became inevitable (came with) the two or three extraordinary portraits of lunatics by Gericault, painted in the first period of romantic disillusion and defiance which followed the defeat of Napoleon and the shoddy triumph of the French bourgeoisie. The paintings were neither morally anecdotal nor symbolic; they were straight portraits, traditionally painted. Yet their sitters had no social role and were presumed to be

incapable of fulfilling any....to choose to paint dispossessed lunatics was a comment on men of property and power; but it was also an assertion that the essential spirit of man was independent of the role into which society forced him. (Berger 1972, p.38).



Fig.7

The Insane Woman Theodore Gericault

My assertion is that this point in history marked not the decline of the painted portrait; but the beginning of modern portraiture.



Fig.8

Breakfast in bed (1897)

Mary Cassatt

In the final decades of the nineteenth century the Impressionists heralded the beginnings of modernism.

'... it is quite true that the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists were highly responsive to the visual appearance of the contemporary world in the shape of their own circle of family and friends, on the one hand, and to the intensified response to human subjects on the other the modernist attitude to such works has been to play down their status as portraits and to emphasize the formal inventiveness of (the) paintings as though there was some necessary contradiction between responsiveness in the picture-plane and to human character. (Nochlin, 1974, p. 29). (See Fig. 8).

In the 20th century portrait painting has not been considered an important art form. The prevalence of modernist thought and a cheap and accessible substitute in photography are partly responsible for this recent decline. But perhaps a more telling answer lies in the multiplicity of modern modes of communication; images of what we are or should be are constantly in our consciousness, forcing us to cope with a greatly expanded awareness of the identity of humanity.

With the decline of modernist certainties, twentieth century artists can now be seen to have maintained a persistent and consistent interest in continuing to portray their fellow human beings.

Berger published his essay in 1972 as a part of the ideological debates of the time. From the perspective of ten years on when it now appears that Berger's argument is much too narrow, it is time to look toward a more appropriate definition of just what a portrait can be in late twentieth century society.

It seems to me that Berger's 'professional' portrait is based on the type of aristocratic portrait which evolved in the seventeenth century. This formula has with slight permutations survived to the present day in the form of vast numbers of competent representations of

'important' people which are commissioned for public and private institutions or submitted as entries in competitions like the Archibald Prize, Australia's most notable portraiture competition.

If, in fact the type of portrait under consideration is the type of portrait that Berger calls 'professional'. then I agree with him; I too can see no reason to lament its passing. Where I disagree, is with his claim that the role of portraiture remains fixed, that no other interpretation is viable.



Fig.9

Self-portrait (1906)

Paula Modersohn-Becker

Part Two

The Contemporary Mode

In the second part of this paper I will attempt to define the relevance of portraiture for me, as a woman artist. I will begin by examining a contemporary debate within feminist art theory about a particular painting.

In an article entitled 'What's Wrong with Images of Women', Griselda Pollock critiques a Paula Modersohn-Becker self-portrait on a number of formal devices. (See Fig. 9).

The tension lies between the **naturalness** of the image of woman as nude and the **unnaturalness** of the portrait of the artist as a young woman. Two separate traditions collide resulting in **an image that neither works as a nude for there is too much self-possession, nor as a statement of an artist, since the associations are those of nature, not culture.** The painting must be considered a failure, not simply because an alternative iconographic tradition did not yet exist but rather because of the inseparability of the signifier and the signified.' (Pollock, 1977, p.136)(my emphasis)

Again in 'Old Mistresses: women art and ideology' Griselda Pollock says:

'At one level the painting is an image of fecundity, establishing a parallel between woman and nature. But it is also clear that the painting is intended to be a portrait depicting a self-possessed individual. The assertiveness of the portrait head competes with the imagery of the nude female body surrounded by vegetation. But the portrait connotations are, in fact, seriously undermined by that setting and its

associated meanings. However, the title, 'Self portrait' suggests that the painting was also intended as an image of the artist. Yet all the **traditional** signs which are usually associated with artists' self-portraits are significantly absent. The painting can be 'read' as an attempt to produce positive and new relationships between creativity and fecundity, between notions of women and of art. But we know that the woman in the painting is an artist only from the information provided by the title and, therefore, external to the painting itself. The elements with which Modersohn-Becker worked failed to coalesce.' (Pollock 1987, p.121). (my emphasis).

Linda Nochlin in an article entitled 'Some Women Realists-Painters of the figure' puts forward a different interpretation entirely.

'The nude portrait is a sub-category of portraiture that seems to have appealed to certain women artists perhaps because of the subversive nature of the contradiction it implies: the generalization of the nude juxtaposed with the specificity of the portrait The nude is somehow supposed to be timeless, ageless and above all, anonymous. In the case of female artists the implications of the nude self-portrait are quite different: while we are culturally conditioned to expect the **subject** of a self-portrait to be male, we do not expect him to be nude: in the case of a woman our expectations are reversed: while we certainly expect her to be **nude**, we do not expect her to be the subject of a 'self-portrait... Paula Modersohn-Becker led the way with her delicate yet powerful nude 'Self-portrait' of 1906, in which the paradisial felicities of Gauguin's exotic Eves or Lilliths are called into question by the brooding Teutonic seriousness of the flower wreathed head, the weary sag of the shoulders.' (Nochlin 1974, p. 31).

This is in direct opposition to Pollock's reading of this work, and from my point of view, neither one is

entirely correct. As a painter it appears that the scholarly erudition of both Nochlin and Pollock reveals a lack in understanding of what makes a successful painting. It seems highly unlikely that Modersohn-Becker was deliberately trying to subvert Gauguin's imagery, and the very **self-possession** which Pollock calls into question is precisely what makes it an image that **does** intervene in the accepted tradition of portraiture and nudes. Both Pollock and Nochlin are reading this painting from their own theoretical perspectives, which seems to exclude the possibility of the portraits appreciation as a successfully executed painting.

At the time that this particular work was painted, Modersohn-Becker was living apart from both her husband and the artists commune at Worpswede, where she had lived more or less permanently since 1898, in an effort to develop her work independently of these hitherto fairly strong influences. There is evidence to suggest that she was beginning to feel confidence in her ability to do that; a likely source for her air of self-possession.

Several of her written comments suggest that flowers had a special role for her, although the precise nature of their symbolism is ambiguous. In a 1905 portrait of her friend Clara Rilke-Westhoff, her friend's beauty is symbolised by the red rose she holds. In a diary entry Modersohn-Becker envisages her future grave decorated with white carnations, having had an earlier premonition of premature death. Again in a diary entry from 1900,

'I know I shall not live very long ... and if I've painted three good pictures, then I shall leave gladly with flowers in my hand and in my hair.'
(Perry 1979, p.33).

In 1906 Modersohn-Becker painted herself twice with flowers in her hand and her hair. She died of an embolism in November 1907, three weeks after having given birth to her first child. She was thirty-one.

Modersohn-Becker was herself well aware that she

was only beginning to reach the real potential of her painting ability. Had she lived longer she might well have provided the 20th century with a painter of 'important' portraits.

There are, of course, many others whose work is worthy of discussion in order to indicate the problems inherent in Berger's position, however, it is Alice Neel who for me stands out most strongly as a contemporary portraitist of considerable stature. By this I mean an artist whose main practice has been the study of peoples' images.

Neel began painting portraits in the twenties, and has continued to do so from the margins of mainstream American modernism for over fifty years. She says of her work:

'... art is history ... I have felt that peoples' images reflect the era in a way that nothing else could.' (Johnson 1977, p.174).

To have held fast to these beliefs in the face of the self-validating force of American modernist thought, is in itself a major accomplishment. She has proved the truth of her contentions by producing an immense body of work; portraits of the people who inhabit her world; a history for future generations of Neel's America, comparable in its historical significance to Rembrandt's Holland.



Fig.10

Self-portrait (1980)

Alice Neel

Ellen Johnston wrote of her:

'Although she (Neel) painted portraits for half a century - she still does not like to be called a portraitist, most probably because she has been thwarted for so long by the conventional concept of the conventionality of portraiture.' (Ibid. p.179)



Fig. 11

Linda Nochlin and Daisy (1973) Alice Neel

What Berger fails to accept is that portraiture has been, and is changing according to the needs and patterns of contemporary society. His 'singularity of viewpoint' is indeed incompatible with the demands of modern vision.

The French Revolution heralded the end of societies in which the type of portrait Berger refers to as

'professional' portraits was any longer relevant.

It is what Berger calls the 'unprofessional' portrait; those of friends, family, neighbours or associates; people who make up the social strata to which that particular artist belongs, which has relevance today. As a means of redefining our role in a society in a state of flux, this use of contemporary portraiture pre-determines that there will be, more 'important' portraits painted.



Fig.12

Mother and Child (Nancy and Olivia) 1967

Alice Neel

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Portrait of Adrian Jones (The Candidates series)

1984 94x107cm

acrylic, photostat, encaustic wax and
photograph on hand-moulded paper

Seminar Two

M.F.A. Theory Programme 1984

'ALAS, ALACK'

A paper on the Construction of Identity
in Contemporary Society

Foreword

As a painter of portraits the primary object of my work is the representation of identity. It appears to be a fairly straightforward issue, but does the concept of identity infer a fixed reality, a knowable immutable fact, the sort of information which could be recorded on a passport or 'identity' card as proof of our legitimate existence ?

Is it a unitary whole, the same basic 'I' which confronts any given situation ? What comprises our identity: is it a social construct, a biologically and genetically determined fact, or perhaps a combination of both? Is the question of identity something which our parents or grandparents generations would ever have begun to query; and if not, what is it that makes contemporary society so unsure of its own reality ?

The question that most frequently confronts me, as a portraitist, is how to convey this nebulous idea of identity ? Is it possible to paint a portrait which fixes that person into an instantly recognizable, knowable being: captured as truth for all time ? Do I want to? Is in fact, my sitter the subject of my painting or the object of my gaze ?

In seeking to arrive at a degree of comprehension about the way in which we are constructed as individuals, I will look at some length into questions of sexuality and gender construction.

Identity: The Position of Psychoanalysis

It is impossible to look at this question without also looking in some depth at psychoanalysis, as our current sense of what is meant by the terms sexuality, gender and identity seems to be defined by our knowledge of this twentieth century science. An idea, which leads us back irrevocably to Freud, whose impact on modern thought has been so profound that all theories of sexuality, gender and identity construction which have been propounded since the advent of psychoanalysis have been based on, or aimed at his writings.

There is no doubt that along with Marx, Freud is largely responsible for radical thought in the twentieth century. Ann Foreman says that

'... by means of his structuring of the individual mind into a conscious and unconscious area, Freud threw doubt on the very existence of men's rationality and with it the liberal trust in the progressive improvement of society. The achievement of Freudian psychoanalysis which secured its impact on modern thought was to relate the question of sexuality to social and political theory.' (1)

We have doubtless gained much from Freud's theories towards our understanding of how we construct ourselves socially and sexually. However, it is an unfortunate fact that psychoanalysis as it is currently practised does much to uphold the patriarchal/bourgeois status quo in claiming

'that women are inferior and we can only achieve **true** femininity as wives and mothers' (2)

Ann Foreman states that

'it is ambiguities in his writing as to the level of biological determinism he was suggesting which have led to such refractions of his work by later psychoanalysts.' (3)

The real danger of Freudanism lies in the widespread 'popularised' knowledge or 'mis-knowledge' of his ideas and the inappropriateness of their literal application in contemporary society. Juliet Mitchell in her book 'Psychoanalysis & Feminism' says 'that Freud's work took place within, and took off from a dialogue with his times.' So, as psychoanalysis 'was formed and developed within a particular time and place', it is culturally bound to that time and place. However, 'that does not invalidate its claims to universal laws, it only means that these laws have to be extracted from... ... the material conditions of their production.' It is Freud's theory 'which is to some extent immune from the ideological uses to which it has been put, and which inevitably surround it, that is being utilized.'

The French marxist/feminist group Psychoanalyse & Politique whose concern is with analysing how men and women live as **men and women** within the material conditions of their existence argue not only that psychoanalysis gives us the concepts by which we can comprehend how ideology functions, but also that it offers us an analysis of the place and meaning of sexuality and gender difference within society. (4)

If this is the case, it then becomes vitally important to be well acquainted with the arguments which seek to wrest Freudianism from its inherently nineteenth century grounding. Not to do so predisposes a misunderstanding of the worth of Freudian theory and the forming of opinions, whether they be pro or anti-Freud, from this false position.

Michèle Barrett's version of Freud's account of psychosexual development is such a reading. She is not uncritical of Freud; but is well aware of the value of his work and provides us with an excellent contemporary account. (5)

Identity: Our Altered Concept of the Term Sexuality

Freud revolutionized our concept of human sexuality. Before the advent of psychoanalysis the term sexuality was infrequently used, and when it was, was limited to the question of reproduction, as may be instanced by this Oxford dictionary definition:

'In 1888 (just prior to Freud's beginning to publish his work) Buck's Handbook of medical science gives us a strict biological definition as -

"sexuality is the characteristic of the male and female reproductive elements (genoblasts) and sex of the individuals in which the reproductive elements arise. A man has sex, a spermatozoon sexuality."

By his work, Freud extended the concept of sexuality to include all bodily pleasure, feelings of tenderness and affection, the sexual life of children, so-called perverse forms of sexuality, as well as the desire for genital gratification.

Laplanche and Pontalis say that

'the claim of psychoanalysis of the importance of sexuality in the development and mental life of the human individual cannot be understood if it is not realised to what extent it assumes a transformation of the concept of sexuality.'

They set out to

'clarify the way psychoanalysis uses this **concept** in terms both of its extension and its comprehension. They begin with the **still** 'commonly held view that defines sexuality as an instinct, in the sense of pre-determined behaviour typifying the species and having a relatively fixed **object** (partner of the opposite sex) and **aim** (union of the genital organs in

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'clarify the way psychoanalysis uses this **concept** in terms both of its extension and its comprehension. They begin with the **still** 'commonly held view that defines sexuality as an instinct, in the sense of pre-determined behaviour typifying the species and having a relatively fixed **object** (partner of the opposite sex) and **aim** (union of the genital organs in

coitus), it soon becomes apparent that this approach can only provide a very inadequate account of the facts that emerge as much from direct observation as from analysis. It is the existence of an infantile sexuality which is responsible above all for the widening of the field which psychoanalysis looks upon as the sexual domain. sexuality is not a ready-made mechanism but is established during the course of the individual's history, changing in both its mechanics and its aims, it cannot be understood solely in the terms of a biological evolution; **however** the facts show that infantile sexuality is not a retroactive illusion.'

Therefore they conclude that

'infantile sexuality is connected in its origins - to needs traditionally known as instincts, yet it is also independent of them it invades the subject from the direction of the adult world (since the subject is obliged from the outset to find a place in the phantasy universe of the parents) Infantile sexuality cannot be accounted for either by an approach that reduces it to a physiological function or by an interpretation from above that claims that ... (it) is the love relationship in its varied embodiments. In fact it is always in the form of **desire** that Freud identifies infantile sexuality in psychoanalysis: as opposed to love, desire is directly dependent on a specific somatic foundation. ' (6)

Freud's theory of sexuality has many obvious difficulties and inconsistencies, (particularly for women) but as these are already well documented and widely discussed, I do not intend to pursue such issues in this paper. What is **so** important is that it was his study of the sexual lives of men and women that has enabled us to expand our concept of sexuality far beyond the biologicistic dogma of the nineteenth century.

There are of course many more theories which have been developed by subsequent analysts who have accepted or rejected one aspect or another of Freud's writings. While it is not within the scope of this paper to deal with them all here, I will, however, speak briefly of Jaques Lacan who, it would appear, has had a considerable influence on the contemporary debate.

Juliet Mitchell in her introductory essay to his Feminine Sexuality says of Lacan that

'he dedicated himself to the task of refinding and reformulating the work of Sigmund Freud (he claimed that) despite the contradictions and impasses, there is a coherent theorist in Freud whose ideas do not need to be diverged from. Lacan went back to Freud's basic concepts (and) here, initially there is agreement among psychoanalysts: "the development of the human subject, its unconscious and its sexuality go hand-in-hand." (However, whilst he believed) that though all psychoanalysts subscribe to the importance of the unconscious and to the privileged position of sexuality within the development of the human subject, the way in which many post-Freudians have elaborated their theories ultimately reduces or distorts the positions of even these fundamental postulates. To Lacan, most current psychoanalytic thinking is tangled up in popular ideologies and thus misses the revolutionary nature of Freud's work and replicates what it is its task to expose: psychoanalysis should not subscribe to ideas about how men and women do or should live as sexually differentiated beings, but instead it should analyse how they come to be such beings in the first place. He took on almost all analysts of note since Freud (arguing) that they are all guilty of misunderstanding and debasing the theory inaugurated by Freud.' (7)

Terry Lovell in her book Pictures of Reality says of Lacan, that he

'reinterprets Freud's account of the oedipal drama, identifying its processes as conditions for entry of the human child into language and society. In the course of this process the child also acquires a psycho-social identity or self. The self is sexed but otherwise undifferentiated and is the subject of consciousness, experience and practical activity. It is not however the unitary self of Cartesian philosophy and common sense which is constituted in ideology.' (8)

Mitchell says that

'the dominant ideology of today, as it was at the time and place when psychoanalysis was established, is humanism. Humanism believes that man is at the center of his own history and of himself: he is a subject more or less in control of his own actions, exercising choice. Lacan's human subject is the obverse of the humanists. The identity that seems to be that of the subject is in fact a mirage arising when the subject forms an image of itself by identifying with other's perceptions of it. ' (9)

According to Laplanche and Pontalis, Lacan's famed 'mirror stage' is

'a phase in the constitution of the human individual located between the ages of six and eighteen months. Though still in a state of powerlessness and motor inco-ordination, the infant anticipates on an imaginary plane the apprehension and mastery of its bodily unity. This imaginary unification comes about by means of identification with the image of the counterpart as total Gestalt: it is exemplified concretely by the experience in which the child perceives its own reflection in a mirror. The mirror phase is said to constitute the matrix and first outline of what is to become the ego.' (10)

Mitchell says that

'Lacan's human subject is not a 'divided self' but a self which is only actually and necessarily **created within a split**, a being that can only conceptualise itself when it is mirrored back to itself from the position of another's desire.' (11)

The concept of desire is crucial to Lacan's account of sexuality.

'.... desire itself and with it sexual desire can only exist by virtue of its alienation. Freud describes how the baby can be observed to hallucinate the milk that has been withdrawn from it, and the infant to play throwing-away games to overcome the trauma of its mother's necessary departures.

Lacan uses these instances to show that the object that is longed for only comes into existence **as an object** when it is lost to the baby or infant. Thus any satisfaction that might subsequently be attained will always contain this loss within it.... (he) refers to this dimension as 'desire'. (12)

'In Lacanian theory, (as in Freudian) the key concept becomes the castration complex ' the girl will desire to have the phallus and the boy will struggle to represent it. For this reason, for both sexes, this is the insoluble desire of their lives. Lacan takes the castration complex and, within its terms, the meaning of the phallus as the bedrock of subjectivity itself and of the place of sexuality within it. The selection of the phallus as the mark around which subjectivity and sexuality are constructed reveals, precisely, that they are constructed in a division that is both arbitrary and alienating.

Both Freud and Lacan are accused of producing phallogocentric theories - for both, (according to Mitchell) their task is not to produce justice but to explain this difference which to them uses the phallus as its key term.' (13)

Lovell critiques Lacan on several points, but it is her dispute with his theory of language that is of particular relevance to this paper.

'he (Lacan) argues that language depends upon structuring differences, and that **the** privileged signifier whose presence/absence structures entry into language, culture and self-identity is the phallus. Possession/non-possession of the phallus defines the sexes and women are therefore defined in terms of a structuring absence or lack.

Women no more 'lack' the phallus than man 'lack' the clitoris. Freud recognized the clitoris as in a sense the female organ which was equivalent to the male penis. What Lacan does is to conflate two oppositions (penis/lack of penis and clitoris/lack of clitoris) into a single opposition - the very real clitoris is excised and replaced by an 'absence' or 'lack'. The real structuring absence of female sexuality, language and culture, is not the penis (phallus) but the clitoris. In societies which practice clitoridectomy it is literally absent. In ours the castration is merely symbolic - we just don't talk about it Lacan's theory of language reproduces this structuring absence of our language and culture instead of theorising it.' (14)

Jacqueline Rose says that ...

'Lacan gives an account of how the status of the phallus in human sexuality enjoins on the woman a definition in which she is simultaneously a symptom and a myth. As long as we continue to feel the effects of that definition we cannot afford to ignore this description of the fundamental impostures which contain it.' (15)

Identity: A Question of Gender

I have chosen to pose as a starting point for this section of the paper the following question:

Why is it so difficult to obtain a clear definition of what is meant by the word 'gender' as it is commonly used in contemporary society ?

Lacan's theory of the subject would seem in part to provide information on the process of gendering: but it is notable that neither he nor Freud ever used the term 'gender' and indeed, in her introduction to Feminine Sexuality Juliet Mitchell goes to some lengths to decry the concept.

'A psychoanalyst could not subscribe to a currently popular sociological distinction in which a person is born with their biological sex to which society adds a socially defined gender, masculine or feminine a person is formed **through** their sexuality, it cannot be added to him or her.' (16)

Moira Gatens in her article 'A Critique of the Sex/Gender Distinction' says that

'The category **gender** commands considerable theoretical centrality in contemporary feminist and socialist/feminist theorizing as compared with its peripheral employment in the early 70's.' (17)

It is a term that appears to involve some inherent difficulties in view of its increasingly popular usage. In spite of the fact that gender is most commonly used in a manner which implies that the meaning is unequivocal, this distinction is used in both confused and confusing ways.

'The introduction of gender as an analytical tool which purportedly yields high explanatory returns, offers occasion for comment.' (18)

The Shorter Oxford Dictionary gives us this meaning

'**gendering**: the action of the verb gender - begetting, breeding, gendering again - regeneration.'

A quite different interpretation than the one given by Michèle Barrett in Women's Oppression Today, where she defines it as

'The ideological construction of masculine and feminine characteristics.' (19)

Each child is born into a pre-existing social and ideological structure, which determines the construction of its masculine or feminine gender, according to that culture's traditions. However, this process of gendering has hardly been touched upon by past scholarship. The Encyclopedia Britannica makes no mention at all of the word, and in the Language of Psychoanalysis, Laplanche and Pontalis also neglect to give us a definition, notwithstanding the fact that Barrett suggests that Freud was well aware of the complexity which surrounds the concept of gender difference. Barrett says that

'Freud was highly conscious of the problem of gender as distinct from biological sex. It was an issue he never satisfactorily solved. In 1905 he wrote: "If I were able to give a more definite connotation to the concepts of 'masculine' and 'feminine' it would even be possible to maintain that libido is invariably and necessarily of a masculine nature, whether it occurs in men or women and irrespectively of whether the object is man or woman." By 1915 he was suggesting that "the concept of 'masculine' and 'feminine' are among the most confused that occur in science" and that (sociological) "observation shows that in human beings, pure masculinity or femininity is not to be found either in a psychological or biological sense." By 1930 he was complaining that 'we far too readily identify activity with maleness and passivity with femaleness, a view which is by no means universally confirmed in the animal kingdom.' ' (20)

The last point seems to be dragging the concept back to a purely biologically given viewpoint, and so, these quotes do not in my opinion give what Barrett claims for them: an account of Freud's consciousness of the problem of gender versus sex distinction.

Even Laplanche and Pontalis in their scholarly and comprehensive work on psychoanalytic language are **very** cautious in their explanation of masculinity/femininity, stressing again and again just how complex is the meaning of these terms. Their definition of masculinity/ femininity is :

'antithesis taken up by psychoanalysis, which shows that it is much more complex than generally thought: the way the subject situates himself vis-à-vis his/her biological sex is the variable outcome of a process of conflict.'

'Freud pointed out the variety of meanings covered by the terms masculine/feminine. First they have **biological** significance, which relates the subject to his/her primary and secondary sexual characteristics. Secondly, they have a **sociological** significance which varies according to the real and symbolic functions assigned to the man and the woman in the culture under consideration. Lastly, they have a **psychosexual** significance which necessarily interlocks with the other two meanings, though particularly with the social one.

In other words these notions are highly problematic and should be approached with circumspection.'-
(21)

Perhaps the last sentence is in part an answer to my question: gendering is such a difficult process to define that theorists tend to skirt around the issue or what is perhaps more likely, are not inclined to be specific about which of the meanings they are using at any one time.

Moirira Gatens says that

'Over the past five years or so, feminist theory, of

an Anglo-American origin has taken up the notion of gender with considerable interest and mixed intent. The notion of gender (is used) as a central explanatory and organizing category of their accounts of the social and familial and/or discursive construction of subjectivity. Theorists who favour analyses based on gender might argue that it is indispensable to see "....sex as a biological category and gender as a social one" The authoritative source for the recent prominence of writings centering on gender is Robert J. Stoller, a contemporary psychoanalyst.' (22)

In his book titled Sex and Gender (published in 1968) he claims through his study of **biological** anomalies and biologically normal but **psychologically** disturbed individuals, to have identified a distinction which he develops and systemizes between sex and gender. According to Stoller the explanation is

'The biological sex of a person has a tendency to augment, though not determine the appropriate gender identity for that sex.... However, a person's gender identity is primarily a result of post-natal psychological influences. (Stoller claims that) the psychological influences on gender identity can completely override the biological fact of a person's sex ' (23)

Gatens says that

'theories of gender construction assume that both the body and the psyche are post-natally 'tabula- rasa' - the mind, of either sex is a neutral, passive entity, a blank state, on which is inscribed the various social 'lessons'. The body is the passive mediator of these inscriptions.' (24)

The two preceding quotes reveal that the theoretical difficulty of a precise definition for the word gender is made problematic by the inability of theorists to agree upon where precisely the connection between biological sex and cultural gendering rests. The increasing contemporary acceptance of the outward blurring of gender roles, by androgenous dress, appearance and behaviour (for example Molly Meldrum's reference to Boy George as the "Gender Bender") suggests a growing public willingness to accept the concept of sexuality as a cultural construction open to conscious modification.

Moira Gatens says that

'Barrett's extensive and central use of the category gender is problematic in that she does not state, support or defend its theoretical status, but rather assumes that there is general agreement concerning its, apparently transparent, explanatory merits.'
(25)

Barrett appears to confuse the issue further by using terms such as 'gender division of labour' in precisely the same context as 'sexual division of labour' and **also** by consistently conflating 'class division' with 'gender division'. Whilst neither of the above usages are impossibly difficult concepts to deal with, they are at considerable variance with her original definition, and with each other.

And again, in theoretical writings, gender is consistently linked with the question of ideology and often used in conjunction with this unfortunate word. See Raymond Williams (26) If you take the process of gendering to be an ideological one (as many writers do) it is, by association, the undesirable result of unconscious presuppositions **or** to put it another way, the gendering process as it occurs in western capitalist societies is of very doubtful advantage to the position of women.

Barrett argues

'that an overlap between gender identity, eroticism and sexual orientation may rightly be proposed, but is by no means continuous. (She maintains that) ... in so far as the social oppression of women rests on biological difference, our task is to challenge and change the socially wrought meaning of that difference. The pattern of gender relations in our society is overwhelmingly a **social** rather than a **natural** one, but it is a social construction that caricatures biological difference in the most grotesque way and then appeals to this misrepresented natural world for its own justification.' (27)

As I continue to read and to paint about the concepts of sexuality, gender and identity, the complexity of the task which confronts me as a portraitist becomes more obvious. The issues I have discussed in this paper are not intended to produce any final answers, but to define some of the questions which form a basis for my practice and its continuing development.

ADDENDUM

Barrett's reading of Freud's Account of Psychosexual Development

Juliet Mitchell argues, in my view correctly, that no understanding of Freud's description of psychosexual development can take place without a prior understanding of the two central postulates of psychoanalytic theory in general: the unconscious and the meaning of sexuality.

Laplanche and Pontalis comment that 'if Freud's discovery had to be summed up in a single word, that word would without doubt have to be "unconscious".' Freud posed the unconscious as the area of the psyche that is not accessible to consciousness unless or until, through psychoanalytic treatment, resistances are overcome and its contents can be revealed. These contents are constituted by a process of repression of desire, phantasy, pleasure, in the face of repeated non-satisfaction: it results from the conflict between what Freud termed the 'pleasure principle' and the 'reality principle'. The unconscious drives are contained by vigilant censorship of the socially acquired conscious mind, but can break through in dreams and parapraxes (the celebrated 'Freudian slip') which Freud saw as having a 'wish-fulfilment' function.

Freud's theorization of the unconscious led him to his 'discovery' of infantile sexuality. Infantile sexual pleasure is gained from activities (sucking, excretion and so on) that are not specifically genital and are auto-erotic rather than directed to an object outside the young child. Hence, Freud sought to argue, the conventional view of sexuality (still held today to large extent), of an instinctive drive towards coitus with a

partner of the opposite sex, was wrong. Genital heterosexuality was rather the end product of a tortuous progress of development from an initial perverse bisexuality in which 'normal' and 'abnormal' sexuality frequently overlapped. The radical implications of this view should not be overlooked.

These two tenets - the mental unconscious and the theory of sexuality - underlie Freud's account of psychosexual development. The baby is seen as having a diverse sexual drive that is both active and passive. These urges can be satisfied by auto-eroticism, or from the mother's body, which the child sees as an extension of its own. The continuity between the child's body and that of its mother is broken as the infant constructs an imaginary notion of itself paralleling its bodily schema and this elementary psychic unit forms the basis of the ego (or conscious structure of personality). In Freud this process is seen as 'primary narcissism'; in Lacan's work it is characterized as the 'mirror stage' since it is exemplified concretely in the experience in which the child first sees its reflection in a mirror. This infant is still bisexual, however, with both active (for Freud 'masculine') and passive ('feminine') sexuality. Its polymorphously perverse drives are never grown out of, but repressed through cultural constraints.

This process takes place through the oedipal stage, a notion central to Freud's account and which unfolds differently for boys and girls. The paradigmatic case is that the boy, and Freud only later considered how female psychosexual development differed from male. The boy's first love object (or object of cathexis) is his mother, the source of his pleasure. He begins to perceive his father as a rival and wishes to murder his father and take his place in his mother's affections. This is represented in the myth of Oedipus, who inadvertently murdered his father, assumed sexual relations with his mother and, on discovering his crime, punished himself

with blindness (which is seen as symbolic castration). Laplanche and Pontalis stress that, this has a **founding** character' for Freud" in Totem and Taboo he proposes that the genesis of mankind lies in the murder of the primal father. This should be understood not as an actual, concrete, event or experience but as a myth which prohibits incest and carries the proscriptive weight of 'law'. Juliet Mitchell emphasizes that Freud's acceptance of the importance of this myth leads him to define civilization as, precisely, **patriarchal**. She explores at some length a fact noted by Laplanche and Pontalis, that Freud's account conforms with Lévi-Strauss's notion of the incest prohibition as a universal law of human culture.

The oedipus complex is resolved for boys through the castration complex. The little boy becomes aware that girls have no penis and fears that this is a punishment by his father. He learns to reject his rivalry and to identify with his father in the hope of obtaining another woman to substitute for his mother later in life. This resolution has a double orientation, since the boy also wishes to take his mother's place as a love-object of his father.

For girls the oedipal situation is more difficult to resolve, because it involves the complete abandonment of the original love-object (the mother) without the symbolic retention heterosexuality provides for boys. The sight of the male penis by the little girl causes an instant reaction of inferiority and is a wound to her narcissism. She sees her lack of a penis as common to all women and begins to share men's contempt for women. Freud held that penis-envy continued to exist for adult women, displaced onto female jealousy. The girl blames her mother for this and becomes detached from her. She abandons masturbation of her inferior genitalia and hence abandons her active ('masculine') sexuality. This process is crucial for the construction of femininity - the little girl relinquishes her wish for a penis and replaces it with

a wish for a child, and therefore takes her father as her love-object. The ensuing rivalry with her mother is therefore very different from the oedipal stage for boys: it is a secondary formation arising from the castration complex, whereas for boys the castration complex is the means by which the prior oedipus complex is resolved.

(Barrett, 1980, pp.80-82)

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FOOTNOTES

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- (2) J. Mitchell **Psychoanalysis and Feminism**, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1975, Introduction.
- (3) Foreman, ob. cit., p.18.
- (4) Mitchell, ob. cit., Introduction.
- (5) see Addendum : Michèle Barrett's version of Freud's Account of Psychosexual Development.
- (6) J. Laplanche and J-B Pontalis **The Language of Psychoanalysis**, London, Hogarth Press, 1973, p. 418.
- (7) J. Mitchell 'Introduction I' to **Feminine Sexuality** by J. Lacan, Norton, N.Y., 1982, pp. 1-3.
- (8) T. Lovell **Pictures of Reality: Aesthetics, Politics and Pleasure** B.F.I., 1980, p.40.
- (9) Mitchell, 1982, ob. cit., p.4.
- (10) Laplanche & Pontalis, ob. cit., p.250.
- (11) Mitchell, 1982, ob. cit., p.5.
- (12) Ibid., p.6.
- (13) Ibid, p.8.

- (14) Lovell, ob. cit., p.45.
- (15) J. Rose 'Introduction II' to **Feminine Sexuality**
by J. Lacan, Norton, N.Y., 1982, p.57.
- (16) Mitchell, ob. cit., p.2.
- (17) M. Gatens 'A critique of the Sex/Gender
Distinction' **Beyond Marxism: Interventions after
Marx**, ed. by J. Allen & P. Patten, Leichardt,
Intervention Publications, 1983, p.144.
- (18) Ibid., p. 143.
- (19) M. Barrett **Women's Oppression Today: Problems
in Marxist Feminist Analysis**, Verso, London, 1980,
p. 142.
- (20) Ibid., p. 83.
- (21) Laplanche & Pontalis, ob. cit., p. 243.
- (22) Gatens, ob. cit., p. 145.
- (23) Ibid., p. 145.
- (24) Ibid., p. 144.
- (25) Ibid., p. 155.
- (26) see Raymond Williams' explanation of 'Ideology'
in **Keywords**, Collins, Glasgow, 1976, p. 126.
- (27) Barrett, ob. cit., p. 76.



Portrait of Alison Thomas (The Candidates series)

1984 110x83cm

acrylic, glass beads and photograph
on hand-moulded paper

LIST OF WORKS AND SLIDE NUMBERS

Mothers and Daughters

1982 58x76cm
acrylic, photostats and encaustic wax on paper
Slide 1

Winifred Byrne Loomes

1982 58x76cm
acrylic, photostats and encaustic wax on paper
Slide 2

Elizabeth 1982 (series of six)

1982 30x30cm each
acrylic, photostats and encaustic wax on canvas
Slide 3

Cooper, the Kid and Me

1982/83 65x104cm
acrylic, acetate stencil and photographs on paper
Slide 4

Portrait of Loris Button (The Candidates series)

1983 110x83cm
acrylic and photographs on hand-moulded paper
Slide 5

Portrait of Deborah St Leger (The Candidates series)

1983 90x83cm
acrylic and photographs on hand-moulded paper
Slide 6

Portrait of Helen Taylor (The Candidates series)

1983 110x83cm
acrylic, acetate stencil and photographs
on hand-moulded paper
Slide 7

Portrait of Barry Weston (The Candidates series)

1983 110x83cm
acrylic, cartridge paper and
photograph on hand-moulded paper

Slide 8

Portrait of Anne MacDonald (The Candidates series)

1983/4 110x83cm
acrylic, satin and photographs on hand-moulded paper

Slide 9

Portrait of Ann Harris (The Candidates series)

1984 110x110cm
acrylic, encaustic wax and photograph
on hand-moulded paper

Slide 10

Portrait of Janice Hunter (The Candidates series)

1984 118x90cm
acrylic and photograph on hand-moulded
and cast paper

Slide 11

Portrait of Adrian Jones (The Candidates series)

1984 94x107cm
acrylic, photostat, encaustic wax and
photograph on hand-moulded paper

Slide 12

Portrait of David Watt (The Candidates series)

1984 110x83cm
acrylic, colour photostats and photograph
on hand-moulded paper

Slide 13

Portrait of Alison Thomas (The Candidates series)

1984 110x83cm
acrylic, glass beads and photograph
on hand-moulded paper

Slide 14

Portrait of David Paulson (The Candidate's series)

1984 110x80cm

acrylic and photograph on hand-moulded paper

Slide 15

Excisional Biopsy 1983 (self-portrait)

1983 110x83cm

acrylic and plastic name tag on hand-moulded paper

Slide 16

Naked Child - Summer 1984

1984 103x35cm

acrylic on hand-moulded paper

Slide 17