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## Summary of Complete Literature Review

### **The Portrait Now: the unfolding moment in sound and film portraiture and its place in the representation of identity**

**Question:** While mimetic representation has formed the basis of high art portraiture for centuries, as we move forward into the 21st Century, this way of portraying has become increasingly problematic. The postmodern portrait has moved far from the classic definitions, to a place that questions the traditional markers of 'good' portraiture by deconstructing the concept of the existence of a solid identity that has its outward manifestation in the face and body of the sitter; a 'good likeness' to a sitter's face or bodily form is neither a necessary precondition nor a guarantee of a true reality within a work of portraiture.

### **How can the temporal, non-representational art of music/sound, hitherto neglected in traditional portraiture, step into the field of representation to extend the possibilities and ameliorate the problems encountered in portraiture?**

I will attempt throughout my dissertation and creative portraits, to offer another perspective on portraiture in the 21st Century. I will be exploring the well-travelled road of historic portraiture - a portrait tradition that placed particular emphasis on the representation of identity through mimetic portrayal. The journey will follow the trace of portraiture as it developed in tandem with ideas of identity and the exploration will carry on through and past the age of mechanical reproduction into the digital age of reproduction and proliferation of time-based music/sound and documentary film image. It is here that contemporary ideas of identity demand a subverting of the traditional mimetic re-presentation of the past.

**Proposition:** The digital time-based realm gives portrait artists resources that, throughout its history, have not been on offer. The addition of sound and music to film image manipulated via montage, extends the traditional canvas for the portrait artist and this is the most obvious area to address in my research and creative work; that part of human expressiveness that has been neglected in traditional portraits to date. While the eyes have long been considered the 'windows to the soul' as the multitude of portraits paying homage to this maxim attest, with time based sound/music, the auditory world that the ears perceive can fill a gap in portraiture that has hitherto been neglected. Therefore a significant addition to portraiture will be the time-based realm of sound and music.

Portraiture in the visual and film arts, since the mid 20th Century, has been significantly transmuted by post-structural thinking to question the very nature of reality, truth and authenticity in the 21st Century. Historical arguments around all these areas have been based on the Cartesian model of reality - a duality of the external world outside ourselves on the one hand and our subjective perception of that reality - a conviction of reality as something that exists 'out there' that can be perceived and conveyed truthfully via language and art. Post-modern thought has radically de-constructed this prevailing idea and it has touched all the creative fields and scholarship. Theorists have questioned the very nature of reality, truth and authenticity as we perceive it and postulated instead a reality that is fluctuating, de-centred or even non-existent. Visual art portraiture and documentary, attempting as they are to portray truth or reality, are particularly vulnerable to this de-construction and have become prime places for subversion of their traditional model.

Music/sound, however, has always been recognized to be a peculiarly non-representational art, because it lacks the reference characteristic of words and images; that is, as a signifier or sign that stands for some other thing outside of itself. Rather music/ sound has been conclusively shown to be an effective conveyer of the inner world of human emotions and meanings that are in large part ineffable. It is this essential characteristic of music and sound that holds the potential to place it beside image in a portraiture whose claim can no longer be to satisfactorily represent an inner identity via an outward manifestation of the face of the subject alone, but rather might be more completely represented with the addition of the intangible, uncanny, morphing sonorous event.

**My research, will explore the proposition that by prioritising music and sound and incorporating its contribution into portraiture, one can ameliorate the vulnerability encountered by visual portraiture - both visual art and documentary - in its attempts to convey the truth of an individual, offering an ideal place to situate, in partnership with the visual and other texts, a depiction of a post-modern, fluctuating, fragmented and decentred identity.**

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### **Articulating Significance:**

We are surrounded by portraits. They inhabit our personal world whether we are conscious of them or not. As conscious beings, we are voyeurs; we have an endless fascination with watching the expressions of the other.

As new born babies, our eyes are constantly drawn to the face of the mother; as children, the first figures we draw are usually stick bodies with oversized faces, and even these faces, primitive as they are, have expression; as adults we overtly and covertly catch glimpses of ourselves and others in mirrors, plate glass shop fronts and reflective windows. We watch each other in public places; on buses, in the car beside us at the traffic lights, at parties and pubs. We attempt to 'capture' these traces in many ways; Facebook with its billions of portraits; 'selfies'; passports, police mug shots and security cards used for identification; press photography, film, TV and family photos, ubiquitous in our lives; modern portrait prizes introduce high art portraiture to millions who have access to museums or news media. And the remarkable thing is, in all manifestations of the human form, there is something to intrigue us, to inform us, whether accurately or not, to spike the imagination.



And yet, how satisfying are our bodily forms when presented as a portrait? Can we really attain some deeper understanding of the other by looking at a portrait presented as an image, a captured single moment in time, a face with a single expression?

Certainly, it is to the face, throughout the history of man as artist, that we have given that singular distinction – it is the one thing above all others that we assume encapsulates our essential identity and communicates it to the world.

And on a deeper level again we could be questioning the very existence of that essential identity in each human being; is there, in fact, anything real to be represented or is every moment of reality, including our essential selves, merely a "*model of a real without origin or reality*" a "*simulacrum*" as Jean Baudrillard contends. (Baudrillard, 1988a)

A dark view indeed but one that perhaps sums up the world of virtual identities, avatars and the multitude of 'selfies' and profile pictures on social media, the photo-manipulated reproduced images, the "fake news" photos and "alternate facts" of personal and social narratives - the endless circuit of simulacra that are the hyperreal, edifice of reality in the 21 Century.

So I ask, can we really attain some deeper understanding of the other by looking at a portrait? As a historical artefact, it has something to offer; or as an iconic trace of a memory, but its expression is limited, and I claim, cannot achieve its most noble intention of capturing the 'truth' of an individual.

**Hence my aim throughout my dissertation and creative works, will be to offer an additional text to the hitherto silent world of visual portraiture. I aim to make portraits of individuals that exist in an extended time, made up of many momentary fragments and that incorporate as an integral part, their 'soundtrack' to express the moving, fluctuating de-centred nature of their identities and in this way, explore the possibilities of extending portraiture to create a portrait that is both satisfying and meaningful.**

#### **Situating the Research in the Literature:**

Work already done in this area includes portrait theory, incorporating identity theory as an intrinsic part, and documentary film theory, all of which, since the mid 20th Century, have been significantly transmuted by post-structural thinking to question the nature of reality, truth and authenticity in the 21st Century. Historical arguments around all these areas have been based on the Cartesian model of reality - a duality of the external world outside ourselves on the one hand and our subjective perception of that reality - a conviction of reality as something that exists 'out there' that can be perceived and conveyed truthfully via language and art. Post-modern thought has radically de-constructed this prevailing idea and it has touched all the creative fields and scholarship. Theorists have questioned the nature of reality, truth and authenticity as we perceive it and postulated instead a reality that is fluctuating, de-centred or even non-existent. (Doy, 2005; Freeland, 2010; Martin, R. & Barresi, 2006; Reiss, 2003; Seigel, 2005) My interest areas of portraiture and documentary, attempting as they are to portray the inner truth or reality of an individual, are particularly vulnerable to this de-construction and have become prime places for subversion of their traditional model.

## Portrait Literature Review (with portraits<sup>1</sup>)

Below is a summary of a 4,000 word review.

### What is a Portrait?

Scholars Richard Brilliant, Cynthia Freeland, Marcia Pointon, Van Alphen, Catherine Soussloff, Joanna Woodall, offer similar basic answers to this question: a portrait is *"a representation or depiction of a living being as a unique individual possessing*

1. *A recognisable physical body along with*
2. *An inner life. That is, some sort of character and/or psychological or mental states"* (Freeland, 2010)(5)

Or from Soussloff:



*"The truth claim of an indexical exteriority, or resemblance, to the person portrayed simultaneously coexists in the genre with a claim to the representation of interiority or spirituality. Both are said to reside in the portrait representation itself and in the eyes of the beholder."* (Soussloff C. M., 2006)(5)

Wendy Steiner adds that the portrait not only focuses on the subject but also on the artist's conceiving of that subject and as such, one could question who is being portrayed; is it the artist or the sitter? (Brilliant, 1991, 2007; Freeland, 2010; Pointon, 2013; Soussloff C. M., 2006; Wendy Steiner, 1987; Van Alphen, 1977; Woodall, 1977)



### Self

"I see another" is a complex plenitude of interactions that supplies endless questions for theorists and artists alike. This makes portraiture significantly different from other forms of art; by placing the subjective human individual at its centre rather than an inanimate object, a functional dialectic is set up between the truth of the external representation - the 'good likeness' - that must coexist with a claim that it also represents the interiority of a subject. As such, concepts of identity are inextricably linked to the history of portraiture. According to theorists Seigel, Reiss, Martin and Barrasi, the Renaissance heralded the beginnings of modernism with the first stirrings of modern science, anatomy and psychology, as well as a

<sup>1</sup> A whimsical idea of mine to add the portraits of the various scholars I review and yet, a point is made. On their own, images mean very little - particularly the more recent portraits which appear mugshot-like in their blandness. None the less, placed beside the text, they immediately take on a deeper meaning; the image and the words each inform and enrich the other. For Barthes, the text forms the 'anchor' to the image, directing the reader to 'see' the portrait in a certain way and the image adding meaning to the text. (Barthes, 1977b) For Benjamin, the text turns all images into literature and without this, the photograph may remain meaningless. *"This is where the caption comes in, whereby photography turns all life's relationships into literature, and without which all constructivist photography must remain arrested in the approximate... Will not the caption become the most important part of the photograph?"* (Benjamin, 1997) (256)

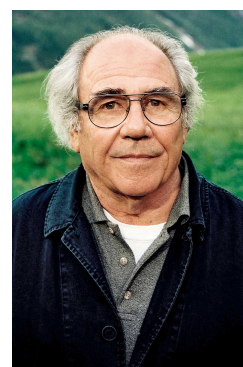
corresponding rise in the economic wealth and power of the middle class. Artists responded to the same societal conditions that gave birth to modernism and an explosion of portraiture ran parallel. (Martin, R. & Barresi, 2006; Reiss, 2003; Seigel, 2005)



This explosion of portraiture came with the decline of religious repression and the rise of the individual during the Renaissance and in particular, with the theories of Descartes. The Cartesian view saw the human as dualistic; body and mind were two distinct elements with a concept of a body 'out there' that could be observed and represented mimetically via a portrait - a 'good likeness' - and a reflecting mind that was seen as separate and stable, with a self-determining will that enabled the individual to act independently. This was a radical shift away from the thinking in the ancient world and the later Christian West, where there was no concept of a self that exercised free will, intent and choice. Realistic portraits of the growing numbers of middle class, with the defined form of a face highlighted front and central and a dark or disappearing background utilising perspective, were widespread.



After WWII, building on the semiotic theorist Saussure, the structural theorist Levi-Strauss and the psychoanalyst Freud, the post structuralists, Lacan, Barthes, Foucault, Derrida and Baudrillard, each with their own variation, discarded the Cartesian model of self as unique and stable and recast the self as socially and linguistically



constituted. They claimed that the reflective powers considered by the Renaissance and Enlightenment thinkers to give human individuals free agency, were constructed by the very language and culture that restricts those powers because words themselves have no stable meaning; without a stable centre the self itself is destabilised and decentred and in a constant state of reconstitution. (Martin, R. & Barresi, 2006) As always, artists responded to the same conditions and ideas, and portraiture, with its depiction of the self as central, became the playground for subversion of the dominant Cartesian view of the self.



Mimetic portrayal became the victim of the new thinking. The abstraction, cubism and impressionism of Picasso and Matisse, beginning with Picasso's Portrait of Gertrude Stein; the deeply subjective expressionists Kokoshka, Munch, Beckman, Sheile; through to the un-personed postmodern portraits of Sherman, Lee, Close; the celebrity



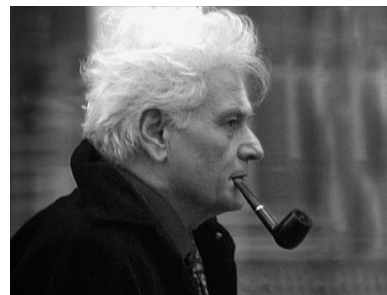


constructions of Warhol; and the desecrated faces of Bacon; the creation of one's face and body image as a 'good likeness' was no longer the imperative.



As a consequence of the loss of mimesis, intertextuality became important - titles, narratives and other signs became the defining element in portraiture. (W. Steiner, 1978) As Barthes contends, text can act as an anchor to meaning. It is a "parasitic message designed to connote the image" (Barthes,

1977d)(25) or Derrida "*Disappeared is the subject. What has disappeared appears, absent in the very place of the commemorative monument, returning to the empty place marked by his name. Art of the cenotaph.*" (Derrida, 1987)(178)



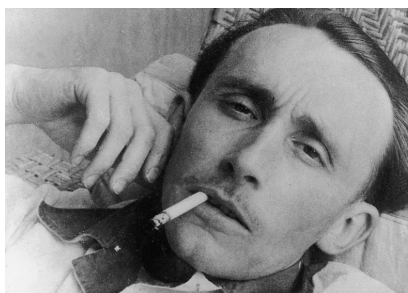
Contemporary portraiture has moved far from the classic definitions, to a place that questions the traditional markers of 'good' portraiture by deconstructing the concept of the existence of a solid identity that has its outward manifestation in the face and body of the sitter.

#### **DOCUMENTARY (Portraiture) REVIEW:**

Below is a summary of a 5,000 word review:

Documentary portraiture and high art portraiture sit in a similar dialectic where the main issue since the 20th Century, has been the question of the mimetic depiction of reality. Looking at the history of film and film theorising, we can see the issues argued in a concertinaed version; a dialectic that plays out over a hundred years, from the first public showing of film by the Lumiere brothers in 1895, instead of five hundred years since modern art portraiture began in the Renaissance.

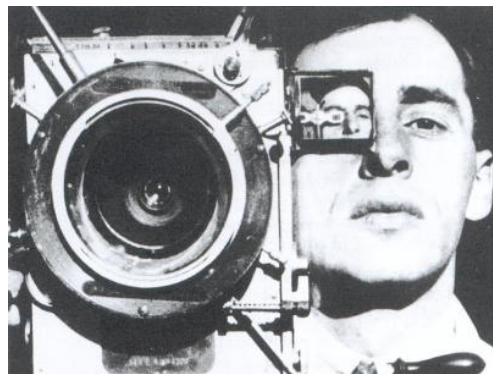
For both art forms, mimetic representation has been conflated with the reality or truth of the referent and the finished work judged according to how close the work comes to the truth of the portrayed. This conflation and the attending debate has been more marked in documentary film than art portraiture because the work is presented with mimetic images and sound in the form of evidence, with the use of archival and seemingly accurate capturing of reality 'as it happens' as well as interpretation of the image in the form of an authoritative voice-over and interviews, that makes documentary appear to accurately mirror reality.



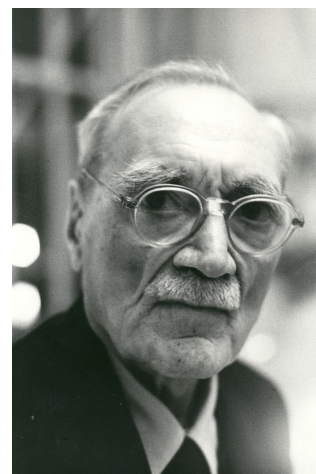
My review argues that it is merely an appearance of reality. The camera was enshrined as the ideal of scientific transparency and this detailed presentation of reality provided a convincing canvas in which to turn unreality into a *pretence* of reality. While Bazin saw cinema as 'objectivity in time' (Bazin, 1958) and Vertov named his newsreel series Kino-Pravda (Camera Truth), many of the other early



theorists - Eisenstein, Grierson, Benjamin, Mitry, Metz knew well that the seeming reality was an illusion. (Benjamin, 1997; Eisenstein, 1943; Metz, 1985; Mitry, 1998; Nichols, 2010; Winston, 2008) Eisenstein explains the power editing gives the filmmaker to direct the viewers understanding of meaning away from the simple perception of two unproblematic shots, into another understanding altogether. *“Two film pieces of any kind placed together, inevitably combine into a new concept, a new quality arising out of that juxtaposition”* (Eisenstein, 1943)(p14)

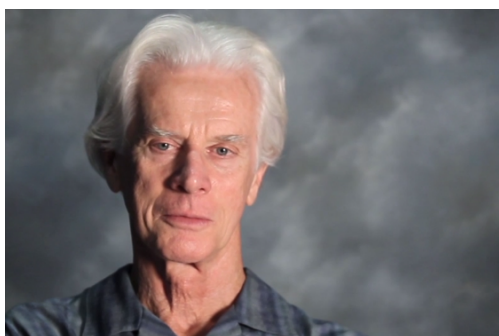


Grierson, the creator of the documentary form in 1930s Britain, also well understood the power of film to shape reality. While Grierson removed documentary from claims of truth by declaring it the *'creative treatment of actuality'*, the finished product was designed to appear to an audience to be a true representation of actuality. (Grierson, 1966)



### **Cinema Verite and Direct Cinema**

As smaller and less obtrusive cameras and sound equipment were developed in the 1960s, both Cinema Verite and Direct Cinema developed as a style, the aim being to distance the films from Grierson's constructed, expository style of documentary with its god-like authoritative voice-over, and capture as close to the raw truth as possible. It was certainly with this technical development that the film portraiture genre flowered. (Arthur, 2003) Despite thinking Direct



Cinema and Cinema Verite finally solved the problems related to the truth claims of documentary, according to Brian Winston, John Corner, Minha-ha, Henry Breitrose, Michael Renov, Bill Nichols, it, within 2 decades with the coming of deconstructive thinking, was shown to be flawed - it was not possible to separate the filmmaker, and all the economic, societal and subjective influences upon her, from the claim of





capturing truth. (Breitrose, 1964; Corner, 1996; Minh-ha, T, 1990; Nichols, 2010; Renov, 1993; Winston, 2008)



Minh-ha, filmmaker and film theorist suggests that in a democratic country, the 'regime in power' manifests in a subtle but no less effective way, as the form of documentary making most likely to be funded by funding bodies, most demanded by broadcasters to meet audience demands for advertisers, and most expected by viewers. (Minh-ha, T, 1990). It is the documentaries that feature celebrities of the day or subjects that address the prevailing issues in a way that reduces the subject to an easily consumed TV format, a story line based on the Hollywood rules, that capture the attention, the funding and the festival prizes. The filmmaker has little room to move with regard to the subject and style of film made when held to ransom by funding bodies and broadcasters in this way. Almost without exception,

documentary portraits broadcast feature celebrities as their subjects - musicians, artists, actors, sportspeople, politicians. (Arthur, 2003)

### **The differing expectations of artist and filmmaker**

The debates in both art forms around the issues of reality/truth and the depiction of such in portraiture come from different places. For art practise, the changing discussions around identity theory, particularly with changes in the late 20th Century, have created the most discussion. For documentary, the arguments around its ability or not, to depict truth and reality comes from two places; economic and political influences and the covert nature of the filmmaker's subjectivity.

Film is an expensive pursuit. The strength and longevity of the style of documentary spearheaded by Grierson and the studios funded by government and other business interests, is testament to the effect funding can have on an art form; the production and post production of film is not something that can be done without external financial support.

While art, at various stages in its history, has been driven by the economic imperative of patronage, certainly in the 20 Century, with the beginning of independent government funding bodies, art has been able to wrest itself from being tied to sources that would strongly direct the final work. Unlike the production of film, creating small, independent art work is affordable and hence able to be created without major financial support.

This has certainly altered the *raison d'être* for both art forms. Art is able to take space for aesthetic and philosophical considerations and such musings are considered its major reason for being. The artist's aim is self-expression; the 'hand of the artist' is actively sought in a portrait and it is applauded.<sup>2</sup> Not so, as a general rule, with filmmaking, except for the small audience interested in the auteur filmmaker.

Filmmakers wishing to offer a sense of truth in their works, will need to look toward the ideal of art practise, that is, where the artist's hand is obvious and applauded. It is art's very subjectivity that relieves it of the burden of objectivity and gives it its strength and poetry

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<sup>2</sup> Indeed the more famous the 'hand' the more it is applauded financially

Documentary's truth then, like art practise, can become contingent; a truth that is purely personal; creating portraits that are 'signed' unashamedly by the filmmaker/artist; at once, portraits equally of the portrayed, the portrayer and the viewer.

### **Problematising the Literature: The Gap:**

Documentary theory is an area whose arguments have been well formed and debated, but it tends to focus within the boundaries of its already well established form. Importantly, despite utilising sound and music within its form, the available sound world has been sorely neglected and relegated to an almost invisible position within the documentary portrait. Equally, it is rare indeed for a video art portrait to contain sound or music.

It would seem then, that an obvious area to address is that part of human expressiveness that has been neglected in traditional art and documentary portraits to date. While the eyes have long been considered the 'windows to the soul' as the multitude of portraits and literature about portraiture paying homage to this maxim attest, I suggest the sound world that the ears perceive can fill a gap in portraiture that has hitherto been neglected.

To both art and documentary portraiture, could be added significant, time-based, sound and music. I contend sound and music could offer digital portraiture a new and legitimate text, one that can embody the traditions and ambitions of portraiture and carry them through to create a meaningful and satisfying expanded portraiture for the 21 Century.

### **MUSIC/SOUND<sup>3</sup> LITERATURE REVIEW**

Below is a summary of a 12,000 word review:



We live in a world dominated by the visual; media in general prioritises the visually perceptible - advertising, film, TV, tablets and computers, visual art, projections - our eyes dominate to the neglect of hearing.<sup>4</sup> As film theorist Christian Metz pointed out, our physiology and perceptive hierarchy holds us in thrall to sight; sight that signifies being, space and presence; while sound, which is spatially vague and with no solid form, signifies absence of the material form. (Metz, 1985a) But why need it be one or the other? I will try to tempt sound/music out of the shadows,

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<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this research I will largely use the combined word 'music/sound' to cover anything on the soundtrack. While acknowledging that sound, (as in non-diegetic, ambient or foley which has an ability to re-present in the conventional sense however limited) has different characteristics to music (which comes with cultural and ontological attachments and no re-presenting ability), for the purposes of my research and creative projects, I will be considering the soundtrack as a single organically structured entity in which the three basic types of film sound - music, voice and sound effects will form a coherent whole. Where necessary for a specific point, I will acknowledge the specific characteristics of the elements of the soundtrack.

<sup>4</sup> In fact, visual dominance over audio and other senses has been frequently scientifically demonstrated. eg. (Posner, M.I & Nissen, M.J & Klein, 1976; C. Spence, 2009) however there are a few studies that show some factors can mediate this dominance. eg. (Sinnott, Spence, & Soto-Faraco, 2007)

to firmly take her place in the realm of portraiture at least, where she can share the portrait with the face of the other. (Chion, 1994; Murch, 1994)

Music/sound has often been recognized to be a peculiarly non-representational art, because it lacks the reference characteristic of words and images; that is, as a signifier or sign that stands for some other thing outside of itself. For this reason, music/sound has long eluded the analysis that has surrounded the visual arts in terms of representation, signification and reality. Early music theorists Susanne Langer, Peter Kivy, Stephen Davies, Leonard Meyer, saw music as the 'ideal'; the 'absolute'; the one that offers us 'significant form'. They argued



that it is this abstract nature that leads it to be most suited to expressing emotions, as opposed to the visual arts and portraiture which are highly representational and viewed in terms of their correspondence to external reality. Therefore, a recurrent theme in the history of music scholarship is that music symbolises abstract human emotions; that music is the "*tonal analogue of emotive life*". (Langer, 1953)(p27)(Davies, 1994, 2011; Kivy, 1990; Langer, 1953; Meyer, 1956) More recent theorists have disputed the certainty of this description of music/sound as purely non-representational (Cox, 2011), a point I am in agreement with and which I'll discuss later in this review.

### Psychology

The music philosopher's intuitive view that music/sound is effective in expressing abstract human emotions is borne out by psychological and cognitive studies. Physiological testing particularly from the 1980s onwards, has shown without doubt that music and sound can convey both emotions and meaning. There are some interesting findings in the more recent research. In reading the many

psychological studies (Daltrozzo, Schön, & Scho, 2008; T. Fritz et al., 2009; T. H. Fritz, Schmude, Jentschke, Friederici, & Koelsch, 2013; Janata, 2004; Koelsch et al., 2004; Kuchinke, L Kappelhoff, H Koelsch, 2013; Painter & Koelsch, 2011; Slevc & Patel, 2011; J. Sloboda, 2005; J. A. Sloboda, 1991; John A. Sloboda, O'Neill, & Ivaldi, 2001) it's clear that music/sound



conveys emotion and meaning via a complex process, taking into account the structural properties of music, the personal and cultural background of the listener, the physiological, aesthetic and emotional experience of the listener, and the timbre of the sounds heard. The similarity to language is also a factor that gives music a sense of meaning not found in the visual arts, however it appears this meaning is in part ineffable and can't be translated either into direct representations or words. (Raffman, 1993) (Lerdahl, F & Jackendoff, 1983) As well, it has been shown music plays a part in the formation, marking and fluctuations of identity, each of us holding within, our own "*inner musical library*" (Folkestad, 2012) or "*soundtrack of our life*" (Hargreaves, D & Meill, D & MacDonald, 2012) that constructs and re-constructs as our identities shift throughout our life.

While these studies offer compelling results, one must question the narrow focus on the minutiae of the musical experience, its artificial measurement in laboratory settings and the fact that experiments use almost exclusively tonal music, and ask - can the 'music alone' that formed the main element of these studies, actually exist?



Cook says there is no such thing as 'music alone'. He asserts: "*pure music it seems, is an aesthetician's (and music theorists) fiction: the real thing unites itself promiscuously with any other media that are available*" (Cook, 1998) Susanne Langer names music as an "*unconsummated symbol*"; that is a symbolic representation that is missing the final moment of representation or meaning. As such, music is constantly urging toward consummation and it achieves this by attaching to other media. (Langer, 1953) Therefore,

meaning in music is not found in music alone but within all the elements that make up a musical discourse, film being one of music/sound's most frequent partners.

### Music and Film



Eisenstein wrote extensively about the way the image and music could interact, well before the Hollywood juggernaut overwhelmed filmmaking. He called for the non-synchronisation of sound with image. Eisenstein, followed by Adorno and Eisler, were ground breaking and sadly alone, in their criticism of the 'culture industry' as it existed (and still does) in Hollywood. They argued

that film had become standardised for mass consumption and film's value judged solely in terms of its exchange value in the market. (Adorno T and Eisler H, 1947; Eisenstein, 1949; Hufner, 1998) The total synchronisation and subservience of music/sound to the narrative and image played an important part in creating the 'filmic illusion' that served to maintain the economic status quo.



Buhler and Neumeyer point out that the discourse on film music since then, has consciously followed the same two opposing paths; that is, those who are invested in the classic Hollywood ambition to preserve the filmic illusion, and those who see this as a blatant attempt to sustain the dominant ideology. Put simply, synchronisation of music and image perpetuates the illusion, counterpoint creates tension. (Buhler, J. Neumeyer, 1994)

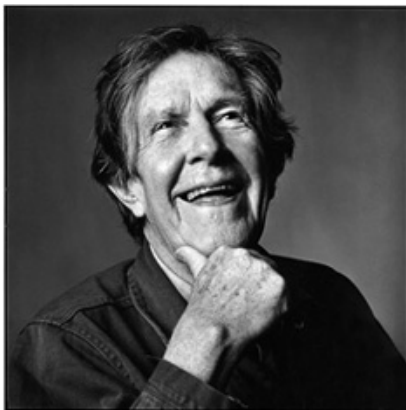
Gorbman, Flinn and Kalinak explain the most pervasive general rule, film music "*was supposed to 'repeat' the activity or mood of the film image and was not supposed to deviate from this nor draw attention to itself qua music ... it is really quite simple: bad cinema music is noticed; good scores are not*" (Flinn, 1992)(Claudia Gorbman, 1987; Kalinak, 1992)



Cook, Chion, Murch, however, claim that the narrative and image is not, as the film industry contends, the most important element, rather the music/sound, image and narrative all work together to create meaning. (Chion, 1994; Cook, 1998; Murch, 1994) Although Hollywood film, TV and commercial media in general, has embraced music/sound and put it to work for its narrative and emotive ends, it has done so reluctantly, with the walls around music's expansion well-guarded and the funding limited. As a result, commercial music/sound has languished in conservatism. (Burch, 1969) I suggest that as long as music/sound remains corralled behind high walls restraining its intrinsic properties and power, it will be ignored and neglected in the visual/film arts in general.

### Representation

Late 20th Century semiotics, post structuralism, psychoanalysis and deconstruction rejected the naive idea that images and signs can represent or signify some reality in a pre-existing world out there. They rejected closed systems with predicted outcomes and instead embraced chaos and loosely bound moments in time. Some artists working with music/sound have embraced these ideas. Sound art, spearheaded by the Futurists, led by Russolo (Russolo, 2004) at the turn



of last century, Pierre Schaeffer's Musique Concrete and the coming of recording in the 1930s, held the most promise for a radical deconstruction of musical thinking. It gave composers access to what John Cage called "*the entire field of sound*", making conventional distinctions between music and sounds increasingly irrelevant. (Cox, 2011; Kim-Cohen, 2009)



Cox explains that, like earlier music philosophers, the sounds produced by Musique Concrete were seen as pure, unadulterated 'sonorous objects', entirely non-representational "*presentations of the sonorous object itself*". (Cox, 2011)(p156). Cage perfectly summed up the attitude when he said in 1961 "*let sounds be themselves, rather than vehicles for man-made theories or expressions of human sentiments*". (Cage, 1973)(p10) This model allows sound to escape the dialectic of the visual that constantly bumps up against the question whether image and words are mere signifiers with no reality outside of themselves. It is this view of sound as being pre-language that must be questioned. (Kim-Cohen, 2009)



While the thinking is that music/sound is of a different nature to the visual arts - that is, non-representational - I believe sound and music can be and is representational, but in a way wholly different to the visual. Recorded sound/music can be seen as representations of those very sound objects, in the same way as a painting which captures a representation of a sitter posing or film that captures the movement of objects and subjects within space. There is a difference, but one merely of surface, not structure, which is that the captured film or painting is confined to the two dimensions of a canvas or screen, as opposed to the multi dimensionality of the sound recording which matches the original. Nor is music/sound an unadulterated or 'clean' sign. As with painting and film, the sound literally must pass through the 'bottleneck of the signifier' (Kittler, 1999) subject to the artist's interpretation. In the case of music/sound, like film, it must pass through the bottleneck of the editing process, marked by the absence of what the composer chooses not to record, what the engineer chooses to adjust, to overlay, to extend, or to cut.

Having stated its similarity as a sign to the visual, music/sound's ability to re-present is wholly different to visual representations. While music/sound can evoke and convey emotion and a sense of meaning, there are no words attached. However, while it contains no words, it is not pre-language because it allows space for the listener to evoke words in its processing. It is this feature that gives music/sound the unique ability to create the very space, free from the imposition of language, to find the self within the absence that Postmodern theorists call for; that space within which our elusive, slippery inner psychic world can reside and be revealed

### **Fragments**

As I move toward the end of this review and closer to the present, the readings become fragmented; each taking another road, a slight alteration in direction to send the traveller up a blind alley or to flower in an isolated outpost. Is this a reflection of my fragmented mind in its search for a meaningful method to pursue or should I simply surrender to the fragments, merging where possible, expanding and contracting, constantly in flux? I'm reminded of a quote from Gertrude Steiner about her literary portraits:

*"I was making a continuous succession of the statements of what a person was until I had not many things but one thing"* (W. Steiner, 1978) (p183)

Equally I could quote Barthes *"The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centres of culture"* (Barthes, 1977) Or *"Out of the broken pieces of the self will come a subjectivity that acknowledges the fragmentation process, but which encompasses and embraces the parts and brings them into dialogue with each other"* (J. Spence, 1988)(198)

There is nothing solid, there is no clear delineating walls defining a single 'who we are' in the postmodern identity; all we have is the multiplicity of our own fragmented thoughts.

Paul Mumford comments on the fragmentation of postmodern society in reference to his own fragments of visual music:

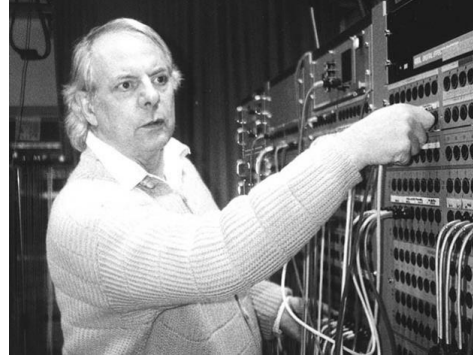
*"time no longer unfolded in a linear way and space was no longer governed by Cartesian laws ... the present was being understood from a bombardment of multiple perspectives of singular moments."* As discourse theory tells us, our personalities are assemblages of stories, beliefs, networks of connections that require a hyper-narrative to tell; that is a *"collection of small story pieces designed to be arranged in many different ways or told from different points of view. The production of these stories are a logic of reverse deconstruction - a re-construction"* (Mumford, 2009) (155)



The postmodern, constantly fluctuating identity, according to Jonathon Kramer, is best expressed by the "vertical time" of "moment music" and sound, as described by Stockhausen, Feldman, Cage and others.

*"Every present moment counts, as well as no moment at all: a given moment is not merely regarded as the consequence of the previous one and the prelude to the coming one, but as something*

*individual, independent, and centred in itself, capable of existing on its own."* (Stockhausen, 1963) quoted in Kramer, 1998)



Moment music reached its pinnacle in the late 1960s with Cage, Glass, La Monte Young, Stockhausen, Reich and Feldman to name a few, and certainly they owe their lineage to the Futurists. Kramer calls the time created with this music "vertical time" where *"a single present is stretched out into an enormous duration, a potentially infinite 'now' ..the music exists between simultaneous layers of sound, not between successive gestures"* (p55) and is defined by stasis rather than process; that is, it is going nowhere, it just 'is; it is 'being' rather than 'becoming'; it doesn't 'begin' it 'starts'; it doesn't 'end' it 'stops'. This form of music had its analogy in Western art. The rejection of perspective which created a hierarchy with the central figure in the foreground and the negative space as background, is flattened out in contemporary art to become an abstract or cubist surface with shapes in a non-hierarchical space; the empty space of equal importance to the shapes within that were distributed in a non-climactic way. Noel Burch amid the flowering of "moment music" called for atonal music/sound to take its place within a multimedia art specifically to break the inescapable linear temporality, the hierarchical structure and ultimately to allow the form to become open and less dominated by the narrative. (Burch, 1969)

### **Working Across Disciplines**

Writing the literature review to accompany my creative practise has been an enlightening experience on many levels but I mention one here of particular importance; that of academic disciplines and the divisions between them. Working across the divides between the disciplines - visual art, philosophy, psychology, film music, musicology, and film theory began to be a strange and desperate task of attempting to understand a whole methodological field that is artificially divided into bordered disciplines.

In the postmodern view, emphasis on the 'purity' of separate mediums is historical and ideological and far from 'the natural order'. What clearly is more relevant and workable in such a view is the context as a whole in which all the arts operate. It must be about the broader context in which we all work rather than the outmoded formal separation that Modernism embraced.

Recent theorists Mumford, Kim-Cohen, Shaw-Miller, suggest if we wish to embrace Postmodern thinking, the



barriers between the disciplines of film, visual arts and music/sound must be broken.

According to Shaw Miller, our academic and common understanding of the disciplines, far from having finally reached their 'correct' delineations, have simply reached a point in the continuing flux of change that will continue into the future. (Shaw-Miller, 2002)



Barthes calls for an overthrow of the single discipline 'work' in favour of a new object obtained by the subversive overturning the former categories; that of the 'text' which is "*a methodological field*" rather than a "*fragment of substance*"; an "*activity of production*" rather than something that can be seen and held; that is "*radically symbolic*" rather than "*moderately symbolic (its symbolic runs out, comes to a halt)*"; and "*stereographically plural of meaning*" and has no need for the paternalistic "*respect*" required of an authored work but rather it is a "*network*" that can be extended and broken. (Barthes, 1977a)

It would seem, contrary to the institutional delineations imposed by the commercial creative industries and academia, that there is not a huge difference between the visual/film arts and music. Hence Shaw-Miller has been moved to say "*music and art are similarly non-exclusive. Rather than conceiving of them as different in kind, it is helpful to view them as merely different in degree*" (Shaw-Miller, 2002) (141)

If we were able to embrace a broader conception of music/sound within the context of a true multimedia, music/sound would simply take its rightful place amongst the senses, sharing the throne, with all the elements that make up the 'text' - perhaps a multi-headed hydra, at times loving at times warring, but always in dialogue.

## **Methodology 13/11/2017**

### **Portrait Installation: *Fragments of Presence and Absence***

*"I was making a continuous succession of the statement of what a person was until I had not many things but one thing" (Gertrude Stein quoted in W. Steiner, 1978)(176)*

Post-structural theory of the self demands a depiction of the inner truth of an individual as fragmentary, re-structuring from moment to moment, formed by the play of words and other means of communication within relationships.

**I will create a series of intimate human portrait fragments**, utilising sound to re-present the elusive internal individual. In response to the sound and as an anchor or signpost to meaning, will be placed film image fragments which will, as traditional portraiture has for centuries, re-present the tangible bodily presence and absence of the individual.

I will make many portrait fragments about one subject in different moments of time, until I have, by the mere fact of their plenitude, one thing which as a whole will be called a portrait.

#### **Conceptual Framework:**

The Cartesian ontological dualism which formed the Cartesian view of self, and the radically different postmodern thinking around self, truth and reality, are the lenses through which we create and also through which we observe, analyse and criticise the visual arts and music/sound. The broad conceptual framework of my practise will be to use the postmodern theories of Barthes, Lacan, Foucault, Derrida and Baudrillard as a lens through which to view the ways in which theories of identity from the Renaissance and the 21 Century, have grounded portraiture. In particular, I will create portraits that use the traditions of portraiture that saw their first stirrings in the Renaissance, and attempt to extend and develop my practise through the lens of postmodernism. These portraits will use music/sound as their primary means to re-present the inner self of my sitters.

While observing and reflecting on the developments and debates within Documentary Theory which focus on the search for a reality objectively separate to the filmmaker, my conceptual framework will instead be based around the long historical context of visual art making where the artist's subjective contribution is acknowledged and embraced as a player in the creation of the represented self. I aim to reach an outcome, via the context of late 20th century theories embraced by the visual arts, that allows for an openness to discover new ways of portraying, where meaning and truth can evolve, fluctuate, expand and fragment.

The postmodernist thinkers, Lacan, Barthes, Foucault, Derrida and Baudrillard, each with their own variation, discarded the Cartesian model of self as unique and stable and recast the self as linguistically constituted. They claimed that the reflective powers the Renaissance and Enlightenment thinkers considered gave human individuals free agency were constructed by the very language and culture that restricts them because words themselves have no stable meaning; without a stable centre the self itself is destabilised and decentred and in a constant state of reconstitution.

Foucault saw the knowing self as a function of discourse. He saw that an individual, rather than having a discoverable nature, is constantly being reconstituted as a subject and object for herself. (Foucault, 1984) Derrida, Foucault's student, developed his thinking, claiming "there

is nothing outside the text", that is, while we have no choice but to use them, words and concepts including the self are open to question. However, aware that they are open to question, we should put them "under erasure" and never lose sight of the fact that their meaning is ephemeral, inadequate and unstable. (Derrida, 1976, 2007) Lacan saw the self as a moment in discourse rather than based in biology as Freud postulated, and that individuals, rather than being unique and stable, are social, general and constantly in motion; they are socially and linguistically constituted, destabilised and decentred. He saw Freud's ego as part of this illusion and therefore the self as an illusion. (Klages, 1997) Barthes sees the subject as not whole. Instead of literature (or equally, the portrait) being a plenitude of description of a whole subject, it is a void around which the artist has woven a discourse. Our reflective ability does not lead to a freedom of thought and self-definition, rather we as human individuals are largely and determinably relational, bound by language, with no freedom. Instead of there being a reality out there that the individual self can reflect and act upon, the very words we use to reflect determine that reality. In other words, our 'self', the subject, is not the centre but rather is an absence. (Barthes, 1977b, 1977c, 2000, 2004) Baudrillard's ideas, possibly the most extreme of the theorists, postulates that in our postmodern times, copies, or simulacra, are more real than reality. In fact, there is no reality, only simulacra. In the Renaissance, reality did exist and the simulacra were place markers for the real thing. However, by the Industrial era with mass production and commoditisation, the connection between the copies and the real thing were beginning to break down; the sheer number of copies made the copies more 'real' than the original. For human identity, he saw the same process in action; is there, in fact, an essential self to be represented or is every moment of reality, including our essential selves, merely a "*model of a real without origin or reality*". Simulacra now have no reality to begin with; the originals, if they still exist, no longer have any meaning or import. We live with a procession of simulacra; our real world has been rendered unreal and meaningless through the saturation of simulacra or copies. (Baudrillard, 1988a, 1988b) Warhol's and Cindy Sherman's portraits are a prime example.

For portraits then, the overriding view of all these thinkers leads to the speculation that subject, identity and representation are interlinked with no clear boundaries because there is no solid self to be represented; the interplay between viewer, artist and sitter or within the psyche of the artist, viewer and sitter, all exist within the self being represented, and the question (with no one answer) becomes: Who is the one giving this sitter an identity - is it any one at all?

Other theorists that are of interest for my research are those that postulate a dramaturgical model for self. In this view, one's social identity is more fundamental than personal identity. That is, the ways one thinks of oneself in relation to groups is more fundamental in defining self than individual characteristics. Irving Goffman in his book *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* develops the idea that every self is both a performer and a character in a drama, where the individual becomes a performing team (with those who support his presentation of self) and the observers of this performance become the audience. Actions which appear to be done on objects become dramatic gestures addressed to an audience. (Goffman, 1959)

I will look to the Renaissance artists Durer, in particular his self portraits, Holbien and others; the contemporary artists Cindy Sherman and Warhol and others; the moment music and sound of Morton Feldman, Stockhausen, *Musique Concrete* and its modern counterparts in sound design and radio phonics, to inform my portrait fragments. I will create and analyse the



portraits fragments within the context of post structural theorists Barthes, Lacan, Foucault, Derrida, Baudrillard, with Cartesian views of the self as background.

## **Method:**

### **Self Portrait:**

**I will construct myself through portraits of the other**, thereby creating a self-portrait with postmodern theory of the self as its framework.

If the self itself is in question, can there be such a thing as a self-portrait?

The self is elusive; the self is recreated in every moment; the self is defined by how the other sees it; the self is defined by social relationships and mediated through language, the self is never defined except as forever shifting moments of perception.

If the self itself is elusive, what is there to capture?

This will be the challenge created by the postmodern lens - to embrace the fragments of self and to bring them into dialogue with each other. Rather than concluding that the late 20th Century deconstruction of a stable self means there can be no such thing as a self-portrait, we could instead draw the conclusion that the self-portrait is not at all dead, but rather it is the generic form of all portraiture; all portraits capture the self and the other, simultaneously. Hence, each person I know will have their presence and absence captured via many fragments and moments and in this way, the question will be posed; who is the subject of a portrait - the artist or the sitter?

**I will start with sound;** that long neglected sense, the intangible, uncanny sonorous event that can't be touched; almost like a ghost we capture a glimpse of it out of the corner of our ear, search for it, but unless the source is present and obvious, we could be fooled into thinking it an hallucination, faded into old air, no remnant left. What more perfect place to attempt to re-present the elusive internal individual.

**To the sound I will add vision;** digital film and other subtexts which will, as traditional portraiture has for centuries, re-present the tangible bodily presence and absence of the individual.

**My portraits will be fragments;** fragments of the energy of presence, and the energy of absence; *Fragments of Presence and Absence.*

**I will play with portrait traditions;** from mimetic portrayal utilising perspective, sound/music utilising hierarchical tonal structures and other closed textural additions informed by works from the Renaissance; to contemporary, fragments of sound vision and text within open, chaotic relationships. I will attempt to capture a plethora of moments of sound with subtexts of vision, narrative and style referencing portrait traditions

**I will evaluate:** The creation of these portrait fragments will entail questions, not necessarily prior to creation, but certainly the questions will come with the ongoing reflection on outcomes, critique and assessment. I will constantly reflect via analysis and criticism and modify so as best to achieve the outcome of extending the traditions of portraiture. This will be documented in the exegesis.

## Timeline

In essence, I will be creating many fragments that I will draw together to make a whole.

To date, I have created *Last Portrait of Moshlo*, *Portrait of Ange* and three *Self Portraits*. I'm working on the 4th *Self Portrait* at the moment.

These portraits will be reflections on life and death; presence and absence.

These portraits are my first experiments, informed by the Renaissance portraits of Durer and Vermeer and Holbein, and the modern portraits of Picasso and Matisse. The intention will be to create many portrait fragments that will be re-edited or displayed in such a way as to form a larger portrait of myself made up of many subjects.

The resources and methods available for display will be important in determining the final form of the portrait. I'm in the process of discussing the resources available at UTS with the Data Arena, AVS and private providers. The choices will be limited by availability and cost but I'm well on the way to finding a solution. I expect there will be 2 or 3 exhibitions in the final two years of my degree.

### 2017

- **July** - Performance of *Strangers on a Train* - a collaboration with Andy Rantzen (poet), and two musicians - Romano (piano) and Rudi Crivici (electric viola, loops) and myself (electric flute, loops, vocals). *Strangers on a Train* is a series of short portrait vignettes to which the musicians will create music and sound live.
- **September to October** - Europe visit - portrait museums in Florence, Paris and London particularly looking at Renaissance and contemporary (late 20th and 21st Century) portraits. Filming images to use in future portraits, particularly backgrounds from Renaissance portraits only available in Europe.
- **November** - 1st Stage Presentation
- **November** - Research resources for displaying the final creative work and a possible interim exhibition toward the end of 2018. It's essential to do this before launching in to full time content production so I'm working with the correct display options and formats from the beginning. This will influence the way the future work is filmed, recorded and edited. I'm looking at the possibility of
  1. Data Arena for a surround of large scale portraits with directional sound
  2. Bon Marche studio as a possible exhibition space
  3. Researching different display possibilities -
    - Large LED screens that would be display in portrait rather than the normal broadcast wide-screen landscape and possibly up to 2 metres high. Are they available for hire or would they need to be custom made and whether the cost would be prohibitive OR
    - Using the Data Arena and the Data Arena Virtual Machine for creating the content OR
    - Projecting the images onto walls and surfaces in a large space with high quality projectors.

4. Researching video formats best suited to various types of display
5. Sound, thankfully, has a simpler technology and will require surround sound with a mix of direction and wide spread speakers.

## 2018

- **January to November** - Continuing creative work on *Fragments of Presence and Absence*, incorporating more subjects. These portrait fragments will be ongoing, using different combinations of sound, vision and other subtexts. Creation, reflection on outcomes, critique and assessment.
- **April** - Extension of *Strangers on a Train* will be shown and presented with vision at Peoples Republic of Camperdown. The largely improvised sound track will be recorded and added to the completed video.
- **November** - The Literature Review and chapter outlines will be completed based on the emerging findings and the critical evaluations that follow during the process of creation and reading.
- **November** - Stage 2 Presentation of advanced progress
- **Late November** - Exhibition of *Fragments ...* completed to date, at an available venue at UTS, largely to test the effectiveness of display options - see below

## 2019

- **January to November** - This year will be spent combining the self-contained portraits completed in 2018, into a larger whole within the contextual framework. New work will be undertaken to fill the gaps in the work as a whole.

Throughout the creation of the whole *Fragments of Presence and Absence* I will be reflecting, evaluating and completing the chapters as have already been outlined.

### Display Options:

The portraits will either be combined via display ie. shown as an installation within a large space or combined via editing into a larger single work. The most likely outcome will be a large installation.

I envisage a large space containing either LCD screens 2 x 1 metres portrait or large projections. Each portrait will be accompanied by both a directional speaker for intimate listening and speakers that project selected portions of the soundtrack into the room as a whole so the audience can experience the layered and overlaid sound/vision scape as well as move in to each portrait to hear that portrait alone.

- **November** - Exhibition of completed installation of portraits.
- **November** - Stage 3 confirmation of readiness to submit

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