Do You Like My Pics?

Exhibition and Exegesis as Self Reflective Study

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ABSTRACT

This research thesis, *Do you Like My Pics,* investigates perceived value in art through the recreation of well-known paintings. Using photography and photo-manipulation the content of the image has been recreated in another medium in order to dissociate the tangible, actual image from the aura of the artist who created it. Recreating the paintings entailed a highly detailed visual analysis of:

- Girl with a Pearl Earring, Vermeer, c 1667
- Self Portrait attributed to Rembrandt Studio, c 1660's (NGV Collection)
- Ophelia, John Millais, 1851-1852
- Various works by Howard Arkley, 1990s
- The Melbourne Gate, Jeffery Smart, 2002
- Untitled, Mark Rothko, 1958
- The Treachery of Images, Rene Magritte, 1928-1929
- Hendrickje Bathing, Rembrandt Van Rijn, 1654

Conclusions arising from the theoretical and creative research include that:

- Our perceptions of art are very strongly influenced by our knowledge of the status of the artist who created the work.
- Analysis of Vermeer's Girl with a Pearl Earring supports the hypothesis that he used optical devices--probably projection (Camera Obscura), to produce this painting.
- Analysis of the painting known as "Self Portrait, attributed to Rembrandt", or simply "Rembrandt", in the National Gallery of Victoria, supports the hypothesis that this painting was not painted by Rembrandt.
- Analysis of Rembrandt's Hendrickje Bathing suggests that Rembrandt did not use optical devices.
- A number of errors were found with the identification of flowers in Millais' Ophelia. A more complete list of species depicted in the painting and their symbolic meanings is included in an appendix.
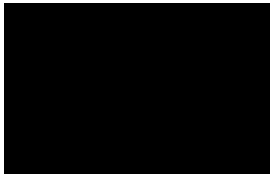
The research methodology was practice-based and undertaken creatively, resulting in:

1. An exhibition of eight artworks, comprising approximately 66% of the content of the thesis.
2. This Exegesis and a three minute video, comprising approximately 33% of the content. The video is also available on YouTube at <http://youtu.be/uLvZjDCf4_s>.

DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

"I, Mark Boyle, declare that the Master by Research exegesis entitled Do You Like My Pics is no more than 18,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This exegesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this exegesis is my own work".

Signature:

Date: December 2012

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Introduction

When I started this project of reproducing painted artworks as photographs my purpose was to disengage the actual, tangible image from the aura--the seemingly magical reputation, of the artist who had created it. I wanted to investigate why a painting by Van Gogh (such as Head of a Man, 1886) was worth $20 million, when the same painting, later having been revealed to be by an unknown painter "after the style of Van Gogh" was worth $5000 (ABC News Online, 2006). I also wanted to investigate why it was that some artists "make it big" and command huge prices, while other, equally talented artists languish in obscurity, making only small sales (Figure 1).

		Actually made by an "important" artist	
		Yes	No
Thought to be made by an "important" artist. (provenance or perception)	Yes	High Value	High Value
	No	Low Value	Low Value

Figure 1 Using a truth table we can see that the main factor in valuing an artwork is the provenance or the perception that a particular work was made by an "important" artist, not any intrinsic qualities that the work may have.

The way into this topic seemed to be through the investigation of fakes and forgeries, and I thought that I would recreate the works of famous artists as photographs for a number of reasons.

First, although I had trained as a painter and draughtsperson early on, photography is now my medium. The introduction of digital photography and the abilities of software like Photoshop meant that I was able to produce high quality colour photographs without the need for expensive darkroom facilities, dangerous and volatile chemicals, and the time spent alone in complete darkness. Photoshop reignited my passion for photography. It had also brought the "hand" back into photography. Photographs are now much more malleable and so the split between painting and photography, which occurred during the 19th century, casting painting as the product of imagination and artistry on the one hand, and photography

as the document of the real on the other, was healing. The two are now equally "real" or "imaginary" (see Appendix Two for a more expanded version of this discussion).

Second, it seemed that using a different medium would cast into high relief the actual tangible qualities of the image as a separate thing from any qualities of "genius" the painter might bring to the making of the object that is the painting. Rather than simply repaint a reproduction or forgery of a great painting, and enter into arguments about my skills (or lack of) as opposed to the skills of the great ones, I could use photography to distance the content of the image from the hand of the painter. I wanted the viewer to experience a disjunction, to have a double-take, as they viewed the artwork. I hoped the audience would recognise the painting and then realise it was in fact a photograph--"That's Vermeer's painting, Girl with a Pearl Earring, or whatever it's called. No, wait, hang on, is that a photograph?"

Third, on a personal level, it seemed like a project whose time had come. For a long time artist photographers had been playing with this notion. Cindy Sherman, amongst others, had placed themselves in famous paintings using photography. And undergraduate photography students have widely been recreating famous paintings. I had done a few of these myself, recreating Vermeers and Michelangelos. All of these had been done by setting up set pieces in the studio and photographing the scene. No-one, as far as I knew, had taken that further step of fitting the resulting photograph over the armature of the painting to make all the parts reproduce the scale and proportions of the original, as I had done with the Michelangelo.

There is a tension at work in these images. There are commonly passages in the paintings that don't work successfully, although we gloss over them or rather don't attend to them (Chabris & Simons, 2010). Two examples are the shoulders in the Rembrandt self-portrait and Ophelia's arms and shoulders. The photographs reveal that these passages are anatomically impossible. It may just be me (an artist often only sees the faults in his or her work), but I think rearranging the photographs to fit the paintings sometimes makes these passages more apparent. My impulse as an artist is to "fix" them, that is, to let the work be coherent unto itself. This would mean allowing my own aesthetic judgements override what the painter has done, to "pretty-up" the images. Wherever possible I have tried not to give in to this impulse. This means that sometimes the images look clumsy, or off, somehow. This leaves me unsatisfied with some passages in the works. But my job here was to reproduce the works, not correct them, and I have done that to the best of my ability within the limits of my own attention, however it makes some of the inconsistencies and errors more apparent to the viewer.

Figure 2 Woman Pouring Water into a Bowl, Mark Boyle 2006

Figure 3 The Milkmaid, Johannes Vermeer, circa 1658

Like many photographers, I paid homage to one of my favourite artists. It was a simple piece "in the style of" without bothering too much with an accurate recreation.*

*Throughout the main body of this text the researcher's Personal Reflections are included in a separate text box in *italic* to distinguish these particularly first person responses from the main body of the Exegesis.

What I didn't know at the time, and what has become apparent through this process, is that I would reveal flaws in the great works that usually only become apparent after a work has been deemed a fake. It is easy in hindsight to see the works of the great forger Van Meegeren as inferior to the greatness of Vermeer, but at the time Van Meegeren deceived some of the foremost Vermeer connoisseurs and experts, and was able to sell his simulations for huge sums of money (Wynne, 2006). It may be that up to half of the works in museums and collections may be undiscovered fakes and forgeries. Indeed, artists like Michelangelo cut their teeth producing forgeries, and many artists train by reproducing great works of the past. Nobody thinks this is odd in music, where classical musicians learn by mastering the greats, and these days many popular musicians make a good living performing in tribute shows. Indeed, the ABBA tribute bands resemble a franchise (Cole, 2012), with multiple tribute bands performing on different continents. It is only a problem in the visual arts, where there is an extremely high value placed on the original, the "authentic",

the one and only masterwork created by the hand of the master themselves. This is where the aura comes in; the magical "hand of the great", the literal touch of "genius".

There are two different narratives presented in this Exegesis. My first task is to describe the process that I went through in creating the images. I have done this for each of the images, presented as a chapter for each one, in more or less chronological order. The second narrative comprises what I discovered about the images and the perception of art in general and is, I think, more profound and important than I anticipated. This story developed over the time that I was working and researching on the project and I have presented these findings in the relevant context of the discussion about those artworks.

My process has entailed extremely close scrutiny of the original paintings. The necessity of first recreating the image, finding a model with the right look, having a costume made and finding a location that is as close as possible, then shoehorning that image over the original artwork in Photoshop, spending sometimes months and even years poring over the minute details in a painting, has meant that I have become extremely familiar with the details of the paintings I have chosen to work on. It may be that I have examined these paintings in a unique and forensic way that has revealed hitherto undiscovered aspects of the paintings, allowing me to have unique insights and contributions to make to the scholarship surrounding Ophelia, Vermeer and the disputed Rembrandt self-portrait in the National Gallery of Victoria.

As I was working on the Rembrandt self-portrait I was initially aware of discrepancies in the shape and details of the face. This was no surprise. I am not Rembrandt, even if we share some trivial similarities of facial structure. What was a surprise, after looking at the painting for over thirty years was that the draughtsmanship of the face was poor. The chin is too small; the eyes too close together and the nose too long. In the painting we can see both ears, whereas given the angle of the face; we should only be able to see one. My method was to first rearrange the features of the face to fit the painting, find another ear from a slightly differently posed photograph, add in some more curly grey hair, and rearrange the painter's cap. All of this took several months. Imagine my surprise then, on turning to the coat, when I suddenly discovered the rear shoulder was four inches (100mm) too low and proportionally far too small. Not only had I loved that painting for three decades, I had been actually working on it for months before I saw the shoulder. This made me realise that we see only what we attend to. I had never really looked at--attended to--the shoulders before. I dare say nobody else has either. But there it was staring out at me, a glaring example of poor construction that I would have been ashamed of had I committed it in Life Drawing class at university. Immediately questions arise. Surely Rembrandt was not such a poor draughtsman?

This topic was in its infancy when I began it in 2006/2007. Some research had been done on fakes and forgeries (Beckett, 1995), and there were some attempts to understand great hoaxes and scandals, such as the Van Meegeren Vermeers (Wynne, 2006), while the case of the missing Mona Lisa was noteworthy (Leader, 2002). There were some studies from social psychology looking at the notion of "contagion" (a key feature of magical thinking that was at the centre of my original thesis) from the perspective of nurses working with AIDS patients (Rozin, Markwith, & Nemeroff, 1992), and the reaction of children to having their special toy "duplicated" and their perceived value of spoons that supposedly had been touched by the Queen (Hood & Bloom, 2007). These references are discussed in detail in my literature review. As I have been quietly working away creating these fake photographs (Figure 4) public and academic interest has grown. The BBC produced a TV series "Fake or Fortune?" (Bruce, Mould, & Grosvenor, 2011), and in the same year there was an fMRI brain scan investigation of exactly this topic: "Human cortical activity evoked by the assignment of *authenticity* when viewing works of art". The 2011 study confirmed the hypothesis I have been investigating through a different route, i.e. "Using functional magnetic resonance imaging, viewing of artworks assigned as "copy," rather than "authentic," evoked stronger responses in frontopolarcorex (FPC), and right precuneus, regardless of whether the portrait was actually genuine." (Huang, Bridge, Kemp, & Parker, 2011)

Oxford University art historian Professor Martin J Kemp, one of the authors of that study, said in a radio interview (Kemp, 2012) that "part of this is good news, because it means the way people look at things can be steered…"[1] I am not quite as sanguine about this as Professor Kemp. I have some doubts as to whether we can be confident that the great works are so great and whether the works of unknown artists are necessarily inferior if our responses to them are so dependent on our preconceived notions of who the creator is. In my darker moments I sometimes think that the greatest work of some artists is the creation of themselves in the public imagination as artists of great and important stature.

I chose the paintings to copy based on a number of factors. First they had to be famous, or at least well known to the viewers. Second, they had to be reproducible as photographs. This meant, in the main, representational works in the Western post-Renaissance tradition and I was especially drawn to Vermeer and Rembrandt. Unfortunately a number of paintings that were famous, such as Botticelli's Birth of Venus (1486), could not be successfully reproduced using this method. I did, however, tackle a Rothko because it seemed to me that the borders between colour fields are essentially horizon lines. Probably the most problematic painting I tackled was the Howard Arkley. I was drawn to Arkley because I had known him for 20 years, and had worked with him making his painting supports for the last 10 years of his life. I felt I had an insight into his motivations and methods. Because he

worked from photographs, I felt his work could be approached by my method. However, Arkley reduces his subjects to flat colour fields with an outline, which turned out to be impossible for a computer to produce.

The Hockney-Falco hypothesis (Falco, 2012) proposes that the sudden explosion in accurate representation of perspective and tone in the Renaissance was the result of artists working with optical devices such as mirrors and lenses (Hockney, 2006). My work has some contributions to make in that regard and I find the hypothesis compelling. It also means that representational art was, at least initially, constructed in ways that resemble photography--using lenses to create 2D images, which should make them amenable to re-creation as photographs.

It was also, I believe, a substantial contributing factor to the aura of the artist.. In other fields such as sports and music, the skill of the performer is a substantial part of the joy watching the performance. We admire the skills and recognise the work and dedication that goes into building such expertise (Dutton, 2009). In popular culture the term "guitar god" or "guitar hero" refers to a performer whose dazzling skills seem so far removed from the weekend player's abilities as to seem supernatural. In the popular imagination such people are referred to as "gifted", with the implication that a gift is given from the gods (or sometimes the Devil in the case of blues musician Robert Johnson). Studies of expertise have revealed that there is no substitute for dedicated, deliberate practise and some researchers have even postulated a 10,000 hour or 10-year rule for developing world class performance (Simon & Chase, 1973). Nevertheless, the magical aura of talent and genius adheres to high-level performers.

For 400 years from the Renaissance to the birth of photography this was the case with painters in the West. A painter was admired and lauded for their ability to reproduce the visible world, and painting was held to be one of the High or Fine Arts for its ability create simulated worlds. Painting has, however, declined in importance in the last 20 years if the content of courses such as one Melbourne university's Art School Painting department is any guide. Please note that as I am writing this the program is under review. From that Fine Art Painting webpage February 2012 (XXXX, 2012):

> "Within the painting area, students are encouraged and inspired to research the full range of contemporary art practice, to be critically aware and experiment in accord with their individual strengths and direction.
>
> The Painting area is studio-based and provides an appropriate skill base, encourages critical and analytical thinking, and provides students to experience a

range of areas related to creative expression. While the early stages are project based, innovation and experimentation is always encouraged particularly in the context of new-media and its relationship to contemporary painting practice. In the later stages, students are assisted to develop their own formal conceptual and methodological interests and direction in particular aspects of contemporary painting practice."

There is no explicit reference to painting, but instead the emphasis is on conceptual and methodological processes and "new-media". Students can graduate from one of Melbourne's most highly regarded Fine Art Painting courses without ever having done anything that Rembrandt would have recognised as a painting.

The program changes from March from the website state:

"The program is currently separated into nine specific studio areas, supported by studies in Art History and Theory;

Ceramics, Drawing, Fine Art Photography, Gold & Silversmithing, Media Arts, Painting, Printmaking, Sculpture, Sound

The proposed new studio areas (currently without names) will include the following combinations;

Ceramics and Gold & Silversmithing

Drawing, Media Arts and Painting

Fine Art Photography and Printmaking

Sculpture and Sound" (XXXX, 2012)

This illustrates the de-emphasis on the traditional set of skills that pertain to representational painting. While the aura of the artist as a creator of fantastic products still adheres to practitioners, the performance of skill seems no longer so important. Hence we can have a situation where Turner Prize-winning artist Martin Creed has an exhibition at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (8 October - 4 December 2005) that consists of no paintings or any other artefacts but is simply an empty room (the normal exhibition space) with the lights turned down ("The Lights Off"), and described on ABC radio by artistic director Juliana Engberg as being a highlight of that year: "A very brave show". There is nothing here except the artist's aura! A bizarre situation indeed, if we consider that the reverence with which fine art is imbued is rooted in the performance of the painter's skill.

Production Timeline
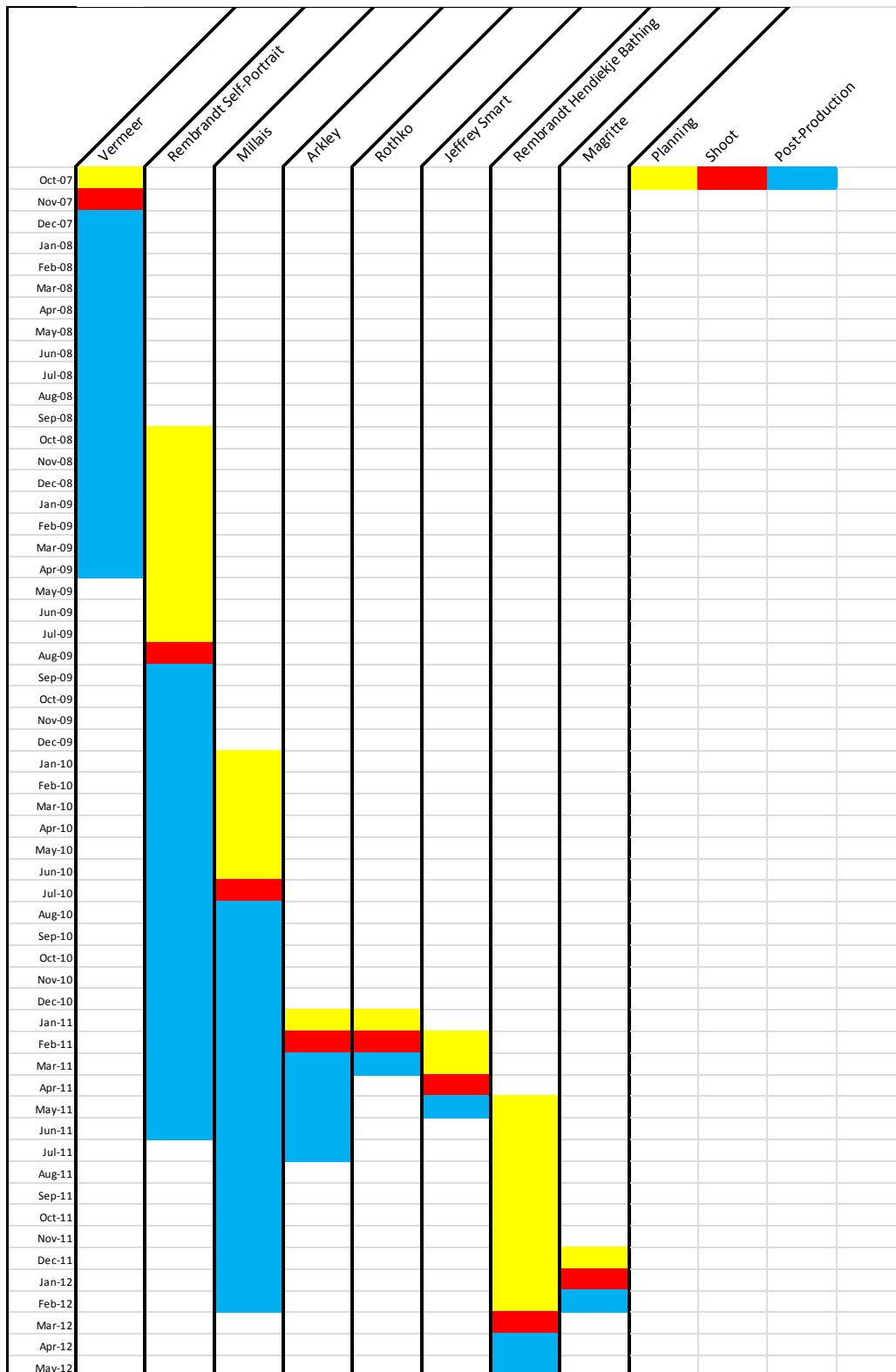
Figure 4 Production Timeline

My Girl with a Pearl Earring

Figure 5 Girl with a Pearl Earring, Mark Boyle, 2007-2009

*Vermeer is one of the canon we studied at art school. To my eyes at the time his use of light and shade, his modest, unadorned style, his skill with proportion and perspective, were immediately appealing. Probably my favourite at that time was The Milkmaid (*Figure 3*). The cool light, the plain, honest depiction of a dignified woman, evidently not an aristocrat, stayed with me. Many years later I paid homage to that piece (*Figure 2*). I searched for two*

The novel "Girl with a Pearl Earring" by Tracy Chevalier gave me the first hint that Vermeer may have used a camera. To someone who had studied painting and was now using photography as a medium, the mention of a camera obscura was tantalising. It might help to explain the godlike skills of the artist in rendering light and form, something that seems beyond the skills of even the best painters today without the aid of photography and projection devices, and certainly beyond my scope, despite having studied drawing and painting for more than five years at college. Melbourne University had purchased two of my drawings, and yet, I knew I could never match the level of fidelity achieved by Vermeer.

Creating the costume was a challenge; see Appendix Three for details. Finding a model was a different matter. I needed someone with a particular look, particularly a narrow chin. I browsed online portfolios on modelling sites such as ModelMayhem.com, StarNow.com and OzModel.com.au. Madeline turned out to be ideal (Figure 6, Figure 7). Being a young artist herself, she knew and loved the Vermeer painting and was delighted to be involved.

Figure 6 Mad Dame folio shot. Kimothy Photography

Figure 7 Mad Dame folio shot

Figure 8 Vermeer's original Girl with a Pearl Earring

Figure 9 The work in progress

It was these two shots of Madeline that suggested to me that she had the right face for this project.

Philip Steadman makes a convincing case (Steadman, 2001) for Vermeer using an optical device, such as some kind of camera obscura. David Hockney continues the theme (Hockney, 2006). Vermeer's use of optical effects, such as bokeh, misattributed by earlier critics as "pointille", indicates the soft focus effect of a lens (Figure 10). Briefly, every lens has a distance at which it can sharply focus or resolve an image. Parts of a scene that are closer to or further away from this point decrease in sharpness and appear out of focus. Vermeer is one of a number of painters from this period in history whose paintings exhibit this effect; the central subject is sharply resolved while objects closer or further away appear to have a softer focus. (Hockney, 2006) Pointille, on the other hand, is simply a patterning of dots for decorative effect. The Vermeer forger Van Meegeren made the mistake of using pointille at a part of an image that would have been in sharp focus in the original painting (Figure 11).

Figure 10 This section of the image is slightly unfocused, as might be expected if Vermeer used a lens.

Figure 11 Van Meegeren's forgery The disciples at Emmaus. The "pointille" on the bread is similar to that on the bread in Vermeer's Milkmaid, however, this part of the image would have been in focus if a camera obscura had been used.

While Madeline's facial structure is very similar to Vermeer's model, we found it almost impossible to pose her correctly. The position of her shoulders required her to turn to an uncomfortable degree to face the camera. While I was able to position Madeline and the camera so that her eyes were correctly aligned along the axis of the original, this meant her chin was in the wrong position. I had to distort the image in Photoshop to achieve the required profile (Figure 13).

Steadman describes a method that Vermeer may have used involving the use of a lens projecting the image onto the canvas (Steadman, 2001). Hockney's experiments show that a simpler device, a curved mirror, provides a practical alternative(Hockney, 2006). In either case the image is projected onto the canvas and the painting is "copied" by applying paint directly onto the canvas. This approach is consistent with the "photographic" compressed tonal range and the accuracy of the "drawing" of the image. It would also account for the complete absence of any working drawings from Vermeer's estate. They would be simply unnecessary. The problem seems to me that the body, and particularly the hand, of the painter would block the projection. However, if the lens or mirror was off to one side, and the canvas was slightly at an angle, this would be less of a problem. This is consistent with Vermeer's image being slightly skewed (Figure 13).

Figure 12 The difference between the best pose Madeline could achieve and the original Vermeer (black outline).

Figure 13 The distortion applied in Photoshop was of a "perspectival" or "keystone" kind that may be consistent with Vermeer's canvas being out of plane.

It was very difficult to arrange the drapery exactly as it fell in the original Vermeer painting. It may be that modern fabrics behave differently to 16th century ones or that I have used inappropriate fabrics. Indeed, Vermeer may have taken liberties with this part of the image or simply have "averaged" the image from several sittings. I cut and paste the image in Photoshop to more closely resemble the original (Figure 5).

A different problem was encountered with the eyebrows. While it is fairly common knowledge that the Mona Lisa has no eyebrows, this is not apparent until it is pointed out. It was the fashion during Da Vinci's time for women to shave their eyebrows and the front of their hairline to achieve a high forehead. I did not notice until I examined them closely for this shoot that Vermeer's women typically have no eyebrows either. It is (faintly) possible that all of Vermeer's models were albino blondes with eyebrows so pale as to be invisible. It is possible that Dutch fashion at the time dictated the shaving or plucking of eyebrows. It is also possible that Vermeer simply did not paint them in. While Vermeer was apparently extremely faithful to the projected image, he may not have slavishly copied everything he saw. The camera, however, does not discriminate and simply records whatever is before it. I wonder how much Vermeer attended to what he saw and how much he "edited" the image.

The subject of attention is central here. In a famous experiment conducted at Cornell University, New York, less than half the subjects noticed that a person asking them for directions was substituted by another person when two people carrying a door passed in front of them (Simons & Levin, 1998). In other words we often don't notice even the most obvious things unless they are drawn to our attention. In the same way that I did not notice the absence of eyebrows in Girl with a Pearl Earring, I wonder how attentive Vermeer was in the first place. Could he simply not have noticed their absence? Was his "camera" unable to resolve them?

We will probably never know the answers to these speculations. What is apparent is that Madeline is a brunette with dark eyebrows and this presents a problem for me. Do I remove the eyebrows completely, which looks very peculiar, do I "bleach" them in Photoshop? Or do I leave them alone and rely on the audience's inattention? I tried a number of approaches, none of which were particularly successful. In the end I painstakingly lightened each hair, pixel by pixel.

Johannes Vermeer was born in Holland in 1632 and very little is actually known about him, although a number of scholars (Montias, 1991) (Swillens, 1950) have attempted to create a biography for him from the little documentary evidence that remains. What is certain is that he lived during a prosperous time in Delft, a city that had until recently been the centre of Dutch resistance during three centuries of revolt against the Spanish Hapsburgs (Montias, 1991). The town's income derived mainly from ceramic Delftware, silk and tapestry weaving and brewing. At the time Holland was experiencing an economic boom and was, in 1650, the pre-eminent nation in the lucrative African slave trade.

Vermeer became a headman of Saint Luke's Guild, the craft guild of his city, twice and was in that role, called upon to appraise the authenticity of works of art claimed to be by Michelangelo, Titian, Holbein and Tintoretto, amongst others. Counterfeiting works of art was evidently of concern even then.

Some 200 years after Vermeer's death, in 1881, a little known Dutch collector A. A. Des Tombe bought an untitled Vermeer at auction for 2.3 florins, or about $200 in today's money. It was not mentioned in the auction catalogue and was in very poor condition. In 1902 he bequeathed it with 11 other pictures to the Mauritshuis Museum. It has since become known as *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (Dolnick, 2008).

The Mauritshuis Museum treats the *Girl with a Pearl Earring* as its star attraction. The Museums website features the painting on its home page, and as a background image throughout the site (Mauritshuis, 2012). It has a page devoted to the painting and the description is rapturous:

> *"Why is the Girl with the pearl earring Vermeer's best-loved painting? It must have something to do with the fact that the girl looks over her shoulder, as though hoping to see who is standing behind her. This draws the viewer into the picture, suggesting that he is the one who has made the girl turn her head.*
>
> *Equally important, though, are Vermeer's fresh colours, virtuoso technique and subtle rendering of light effects. The turban is enlivened, for example, with the small highlights that are Vermeer's trademark. The pearl, too, is very special, consisting of little more than two brushstrokes: a bright accent at its upper left and the soft reflection of the white collar on its underside.*
>
> *Then there is the girl herself, who gazes at us, wide-eyed, her sensual mouth parted. She makes an uninhibited, somewhat expectant impression that cannot help exciting our interest, even though we have no idea who she is."*

The provenance of Girl with a Pearl Earring is uncertain. There is speculation among scholars as to whether it was part of a minor collection of Vermeer's paintings belonging to the sculptor John (Johan) Larson that sold at auction in 1664 (Steadman, 2001). A Vermeer "tronie[2]", or character study, was mentioned in the catalogue of that sale and was reported to have sold for 10 guilders (about 10 days' pay for a cloth worker at the time). Other scholars associate it with a much larger estate auctioned on the 16th of May 1696. The estate of Jacob Dissius contained 21 Vermeers, three of which may have been Girl with a Pearl Earring; two tronies, one of which sold for 36 guilders and another for 17, and one "pendant"[3] that sold for 17 guilders (Janson, 2012). Another painting at that sale was Vermeer's "A View of Delft", or by the catalogue description, "The Town of Delft in perspective, to be seen from the south", which sold for 200 guilders (Wynne, 2006).

It is difficult to be certain about how paintings were valued so long ago. But we can be certain that buyers of art had different criteria from our own. Peasants were known to buy paintings to be sold later for a profit, as were all classes of society (Montias, 1991). Certainly a tronie by Rembrandt, sold in the same auction for 7 guilders, 5 stuivers, would not be out of the question for a person of common rank or circumstances. It's easy to forget these days when we live in an age of movies, television, newspapers and the internet that paintings were the only images, and painters, draughtsmen and etchers were the only image makers.

We take perspective and detail for granted in the age of photography. In the 17th century, however, a highly detailed "perspective" of Delft might well have been much more highly esteemed than a smallish tronie of a girl on a plain black background painted in a rather loose style. The quest for realism was a major preoccupation from the Renaissance until the invention of photography. It seems that art (painting) with an allegorical, or a morally educational element was highly prized as well. While we esteem the simplicity and beauty of the "Dutch Mona Lisa", it is not obviously allegorical or moral except, perhaps for a vague notion of innocence or chasteness, and so might not have been among those works considered valuable at the time. For the next two centuries (C18th and C19th) Vermeer was not counted amongst the great painters and, when referred to at all, was considered a "pupil or imitator" of either Gabriel Metsu or Pieter De Hooch (Wynne, 2006).

Vermeer's rise to fame in the modern era was a result of a number of factors coinciding. Théophile Thoré, the radical French art critic, had a strongly political take on art. He "lauded Dutch 17th century naturalism… Its direct appeal to simple human virtues, he declared made it an art for the people." (Sorenson, 2012) Vermeer, according to Thoré, was the epitome of this direct approach with none of the trappings of allegory or "history painting". Thoré called Vermeer the "Sphinx of Delft" because of the lack of knowledge about him[4]. Arthur Wheelock (cited in Dolnick 2008, Ch 20) describes the rise of a kind of "Holland mania" in America at the beginning of the 20th century. The United States and Holland in the "Golden Era" of the 17th century were supposedly "spiritual kin." The democratic values of America, in this myth, were derived not from Britain but Holland; the values of "common sense based on a libertarian view of our world and of its prospects for prosperity". The Dutch revolt against the Hapsburgs was seen as a corollary of the American revolt against England, and Holland's Golden Age "foretold America's just-dawning golden future" (Dolnick, 2008).

America's "Robber Barons"[5], the wealthy industrialists and monopolists of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries embraced art as a way of improving their image and demonstrating their wealth and status; the more expensive, the better. It became something of a competitive sport with various billionaires vying to outdo each other. The great art dealers of the day ransacked Europe for treasures to feed the seemingly endless appetite for collectables. The banker J.P. Morgan acquired two Gutenberg Bibles; while newspaper tycoon William Randolph Hearst maintained several warehouses and a staff of 30 to store his collection. Morgan once sent a note to his librarian querying the whereabouts of *Hercules,* a sculpture thought to be by Michelangelo. The librarian replied "This Bronze bust is in your library, and faces you when sitting in your chair. It has been there for about a year." When dealer G. S. Hellman showed Morgan Vermeer's *A Lady Writing,* Morgan asked "Who is Vermeer?" Hellman explained Vermeer's place in Dutch art, how few paintings existed and how sought

after they were. The price he quoted was $100,000 (about $2 million today). Morgan simply replied: "I'll take it." (Dolnick, 2008)

Many of these paintings were donated or lent to public galleries. A masterpiece housed in your private collection might impress your peers and demonstrate your aesthetic sensibilities, but one donated to a museum does all that and displays your civic largesse as well.

No account of Vermeer would be complete without reference to Dutch forger Han van Meegeren. Whatever else he might have been he was a skilled artisan trained in the traditional techniques of oil painting, including grinding his own pigments. Van Meegeren was a forger with a difference. Instead of copying extant Vermeers he created "missing" Vermeers that played to the avarice of collectors and the ambitions of connoisseurs alike (Figure 11). Bitter at an art world that he felt had rejected his traditional style in favour of a modern art that paid little heed to technique, Van Meegeren set out to humiliate the critics of his time, in particular Walter Bredius. Fuelled by resentment and a sense of entitlement, he researched the methods used by scientific evaluators of authenticity and succeeded in developing a technique, using Bakelite on 17th century canvas and stretchers that did, indeed, fool the connoisseurs.

He was only caught by the efforts of a zealous policeman, Joop Pillar, who was not investigating art fraud but Nazi collaborators, in the weeks following the liberation of Holland in 1945.

Finally Dolnick, in his 2008 book, *The Forger's Spell,* frames the question that concerns us here;

> *"Van Meegeren posed it in its starkest form. 'Yesterday this picture was worth millions of guilders, and experts and art lovers would come from all over the world to see it,' he declared at his trial. 'Today, it is worth nothing, and nobody would cross the street to see it for free. But the picture has not changed. What has?'"*

Dolnick continues, "the picture had lost its glamour. Why? Because the 'experts and art lovers' were as fake as it was. The world was full of people who thought of themselves as art lovers but were in fact merely snobs." He then tries to mount a defence against this argument. He quotes the philosopher Alfred Lessing:

> *"Vermeer was great not only because he painted beautiful pictures. 'He is great for that reason plus something else. And that something else is precisely his originality, i.e., the fact that he painted certain pictures in a certain manner at a certain time in*

history and the development of art.' To create something new is an achievement.
Einstein was the first to see that e = mc² *Afterward any actor could don a fuzzy wig*
and scribble the identical formula on a blackboard. That wouldn't make him Einstein."

Dolnick then invokes Denis Dutton.

"When we praise a work of art, we have in mind not only the finished product but the
way the product was made...imagine listening to a recording of a pianist and admiring
her dexterity. If we learned that later an engineer had sped up the tape ... we would
feel cheated. In a similar way, a forger's achievement is less than it seems,
regardless of its beauty, because the forger has the advantage of working from
someone else's model."

I want to take issue with Dolnick's defence. First, just how original was Vermeer? One of the
great problems of Vermeer scholarship was already apparent with Thoré. Only 21 works
were actually signed by the painter, and some of those signatures are not considered
genuine. Over the years many paintings had been attributed to other more well-known and
more valuable names. Indeed "Woman Reading a Letter" (Figure 14) has been attributed to
Rembrandt, and then to Pieter de Hooch, before being attributed to Vermeer. (Wynne, 2006)
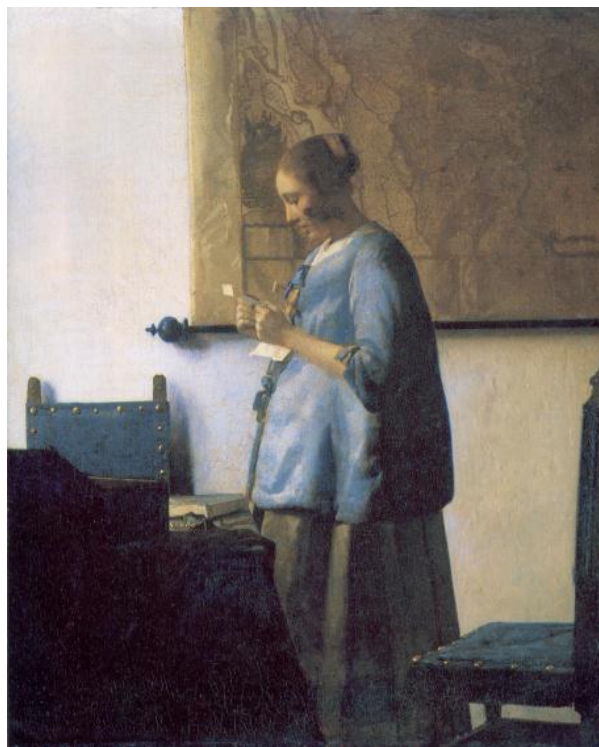
Figure 14 Woman Reading a Letter, Vermeer, 1663-1664

Another problem is Vermeer's style of painting.

> *"The range of Vermeer's style and his technique is extraordinary. The relatively thick impastos of the View of Delft and the Milkmaid contrast sharply with the thinly applied glazes of the Woman in Blue Reading a Letter or the Girl with a Wineglass. And the highly blended contours of the Woman Holding a Balance and the Girl with the Pearl Earring contra pose the flat, relatively unblended tonal shapes of the Lacemaker. Moreover, Vermeer's themes have a desultory aspect, jumping from landscapes to tronies, from letter writers and readers to musical theatre. Further, the Delft Master appears to have dated only one of his paintings (the Procuress in 1656) while using a variety of signature formats."* (Boone, 2012)

Currently there are 34 or 35 paintings that scholars are in agreement about attributing to Vermeer. As many as 73 paintings were at some time attributed to Vermeer and these attributions have been the subject of some heated debate over the years.

One could be forgiven for being a little sceptical about any claims that Vermeer was particularly original, given that connoisseurs and scholars have trouble deciding just what is and what is not his work. What Dolnick is avoiding here, particularly with that subtle little gliss away to Einstein, is that the success of any forgery is the same as any magic trick. We see what the magician intends us to see because they have directed our attention away from their sleight of hand.

Furthermore, the comparison to Einstein is seductive but deceptive. Scientists and artists work in diametrically opposed ways. Scientists are engaged in an ongoing debate about the nature of truth. While a good scientist knows that all theories are only an approximation to the truth, nevertheless the project of science is to try to move closer to the truth. Theories are tested and openly discussed. Einstein's work and methods were widely published and have been subjected to test after test. Artists, on the other hand, are concerned with creating illusions. Painters, after all, create the illusion of depth on a two-dimensional surface. But more profoundly, as Hockney suggests, artists are secretive about their methods and techniques. They are not so much interested in the project or progress of their field but with demonstrating their skills, keeping up with the latest fashions, while simultaneously marking out their own brand or style distinct from their peers or competitors. The history of painting is not so much a progress as a succession of artists trying to be new and/or better or different than those before (Hockney, 2006).

The bigger question that Dolnick avoids defending, but hints at in his book, is that we are dependent for attribution on the work of scholars and connoisseurs who are clearly fallible

themselves. When we see a great work of art we are often taking on faith the attribution that it is the work of a master, and is a *great work.* Taking something on faith without reference to cause and effect is a workable definition of *magical thinking*. To be absolutely clear, there is no provenance for any Vermeer paintings. While there have been great efforts to attribute paintings to Vermeer, and there are some good circumstantial documents from auction catalogues, there are simply no "chain of custody" records for any Vermeer painting. *Girl with a Pearl Earring* is particularly enigmatic. There are no descriptions in catalogues from the time that describe any paintings definitively as that painting. There are vague references to tronies "painted in Turkish Fashion", a reference to the turban or headscarf, but no descriptions that could unequivocally be *Girl with a Pearl Earring*. The provenance, or "chain of custody", going backwards, stops with Tombes in 1881.

My Self Portrait as a Rembrandt Self Portrait

Figure 15 Self Portrait as Rembrandt, Mark Boyle, 2010

My Self Portrait as a Rembrandt Self Portrait

Rembrandt Studios made many self portraits, quite a few of which are of contested attribution. Looking at his self portraits (or portraits of him) it occurred to me that we have similar noses. It seemed that I might be a good model, if I could find a self portrait he did in which I could pass for a similar age. I finally decided on the NGV self portrait (Figure 16). This was my first exposure to Rembrandt. I remember as a young person spending a good deal of time poring over this work, admiring the technique, the light and the emotional tone captured by the artist. The Rembrandt name was redolent with associations. Every nuance of brush and palette seemed to eloquently convey a mood of deep introspection, clear eyes examining and weighing the soul with brutal honesty. Such clarity, such economy, this painting seemed to embody the myth of the great man, the sage, and showcase the sublime technique. Some years later it was reattributed. It is now described dryly by the appellation "Manner of Rembrandt, Portrait of Rembrandt (date unknown)." Was I taken in? Is it a fake? Could it still be such a good painting? Why does its reattribution matter? Why has the value plummeted? If I was to come to that painting now, never having seen it before, and without the Rembrandt attribution, would I be so humbled by it? Was my admiration of the painting false? Did my eyes deceive me?

Given that my experience was not so much different to others who see this painting we can deduce a number of logical possibilities.

1. This painting is as good as I thought it was. There is at least one other (unknown) painter who is as good as Rembrandt, hence we over-rate some artists and under-rate others.

2. This painting is not as good as I thought it was. There is some mechanism by which my appreciation of this painting was influenced by the myth that surrounds Rembrandt, such that I was influenced to over-value it.

This gives us two hypotheses.

1. We over-value some artists at the expense of others.

2. We over-value some artworks because of who they are attributed to.

The Self Portrait (Figure 16) in the National Gallery of Victoria was my first Rembrandt. It had all the qualities I was primed to expect of the great master; soulful, clear-eyed introspection, masterful, painterly technique. I first encountered it sometime in the late '70s or early '80s. I was studying painting at the time and it seemed to me to be a wonderful work. I reverently admired it for long periods of time. Imagine my surprise when, in 1984, it was declared a fake. Now, some two decades later, it has been revised yet again. Analysis of the canvas and stretchers indicate that it is painted on a piece of linen that could well have come from the Rembrandt studio while the stretcher is the same type, timber and age as Rembrandt's other work. So it is possibly a work by a student or apprentice from his studio.

Figure 16 Self Portrait attributed to Rembrandt, NGV collection, 1665(?)

I decided to do the piece as a self-portrait (Figure 15), because of my strong emotional ties to this painting and because Rembrandt and I have a similar nose (Figure 17). Furthermore, Rembrandt is considered a genius, and I, patently, am not! This little irony appealed to me because it plays into the myth of genius, the hand of the master, which is part of my exploration of magical thinking. Disappointingly, I look less like Rembrandt than I at first thought. Although we have the same nose, that is about where the resemblance begins and ends.

When I began to shoot my version, my test shots revealed some interesting first impressions.

There is an anatomical impossibility involved in this painting that is not immediately apparent. If you compare the image above of the painting with the photographs below, Figure 17 and Figure 18 you will see that the ear on the viewer's left (subject's right ear) cannot be visible given the angle to which the face is turned. There is some conjecture about how much Rembrandt relied on optical devices, however, Rembrandt doesn't normally make this error. It should be possible for any careful draughtsman to avoid this error, by relying on observation alone.

Figure 17 Ear visible when face is directly facing viewer.

Figure 18 Slight turning of head to match the painting is enough to obscure the ear.

Furthermore, the light is not "Rembrandt Lighting" (Figure 16), a term used by photographers to describe a specific portrait lighting style. In this style the "key light" is a little higher than the subject, at about 45°, so that an upside-down triangle of light illuminates the shadow side cheekbone (Figure 19 to Figure 22). To be more precise, if there is Rembrandt lighting in this painting, it is too big and clumsy, extending almost to the shadow-side ear.

The light-side cheek (our left, sitter's right) is also clumsily executed, being virtually straight down and not curving slightly, as all the following self portraits do, as well as the photographs.

The coat collar is almost in an impossible position and as Figure 17 and Figure 18 show, the head does not sit correctly on the body.

Figure 19 Rembrandt Self Portrait,1658

Figure 20 Rembrandt Self Portrait, c. 1641

Figure 21 Rembrandt Self Portrait with Two Circles, c. 1665.1669

Figure 22 Self Portrait with Beret and Two Gold Chains, c. 1642-1643

All of the above Rembrandt self portraits exhibit "Rembrandt lighting"

So this painting, the one I so reverently admired, turns out to be rather clumsy and not like a Rembrandt at all. So why was I taken in? Admittedly, I was much younger then. In my late teens and early 20s I harboured an ambition to be a painter. But I think the main issue was that I believed it to be a Rembrandt, and so I saw it as a Rembrandt, without analysing it with much careful scrutiny at all. I was not alone. The NGV thought it to be a Rembrandt too, as well as all the "punters" who trooped in reverently to see it. Consider your own opinion of the piece. Did your perception and feelings about it change as you read the above descriptions?

Reflections on Ophelia
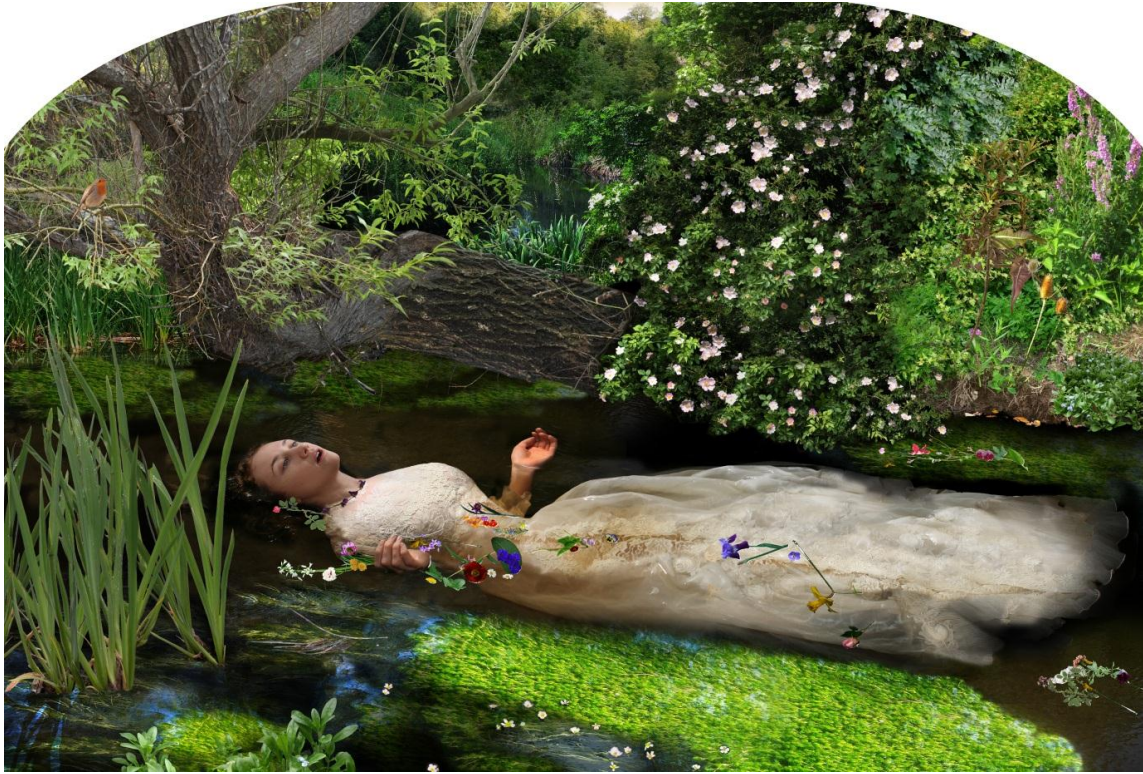
Figure 23 Ophelia, Mark Boyle, 2010-2012

Figure 24 Ophelia, Sir John Everett Millais, 1851-1852

*One of the things that strikes me as I engage in this process is how anatomically impossible the "Ophelia" is (*Figure 24*). When I first studied the image in order to replicate it I did not notice so many things about it. I am reminded about how little we, in fact, do see.*

The process of human vision is completely different from how a camera sees. When we look at an image our eyes scan the significant details and the image is built up and held in the memory (Vogt & Magnussen, 2007).
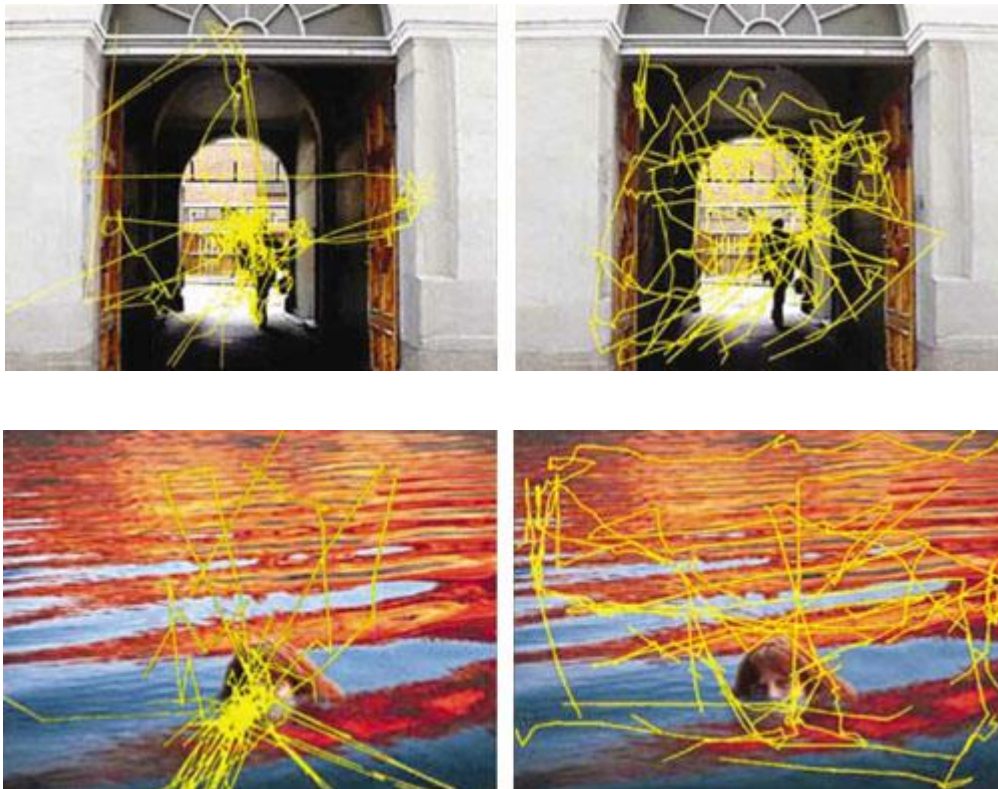
Figure 25 Eye tracking when looking at images. Images on left untrained observers, images on right trained artists.

Artists scan the image all over, spending less time on psychologically significant objects and people and spending more time evaluating the whole scene (Munger, 2007).When I studied life drawing at college I was trained to measure the components of the subject and the scene before me. This takes a lot of practise; to see what is actually there rather than take the meaning of the scene. This latter is, after all, what our visual systems are for (Livingstone,

2002, p. 24). Humans did not evolve eyes to marvel at the aesthetic beauty of the world around us. That is a happy by-product of a sensory system that evolved to distinguish significant objects in the world around us, specifically food and threats, faces, potential mates, etc. You will notice, however, that even trained eyes do not scan the image as a whole (Figure 25). To focus attention on every small detail involves work and energy, much of which is redundant unless we have a reason to examine the minutiae of every passage in an image, such as trying to make two images match. Our eyes, or more precisely our visual system, work very differently to a camera. Having studied both drawing and photography, I am struck by the difference in approach. When we make a drawing we (usually) start with a blank surface and build in the details as we go, starting with the most relevant parts of the image, and the relationship between the parts. It is easy just to leave out the bits we don't want or don't even see. We simply don't put them in. With a camera, the approach is the opposite. Everything in the scene will be recorded by default. Often the photographer's job is to try to see all that is there in order to deliberately excise them from the scene. The work is in simplifying the scene. This is why photographers working in commercial applications such as product and portrait will use a studio or backdrop. The idea is to start with a blank environment and then introduce only those elements that are required.

In my work with these "recreated images", matching carefully conceived and constructed photographic images to pre-existing paintings, I came upon this fact repeatedly. No matter how hard I and others helping me examine the paintings while planning the images, details escaped my attention, I overlooked some small detail in the photograph that seemed fine during the shoot but later seemed completely wrong.

> *With Ophelia, the arms are in an impossible position and I had to "amputate" (cut and paste), Marnie's arms into the position they were in the painting; the hands are also completely wrong and I had to composite them from three or four individual shots. The face is a peculiar shape with the jaw being bigger than what seems feasible. The violets that form the necklace are ridiculously small. And the near shoulder! That really irritates me. Marnie has a beautiful, graceful neck. Millais has the shoulder up so high that Ophelia has a shortened neck.*

When I say wrong (above), I mean anatomically impossible. The contrast with Vermeer's Girl with a Pearl Earring is obvious. Vermeer's face was distorted (perspective shift), but anatomically accurate. Interestingly, the difference is not apparent until this close scrutiny takes place, trying to fit the photographic image to the painted one. Millais was a skilled and adept painter who was working representationally, trying his hardest to recreate the scene in front of him. He was drawing from life and contemporary critics noted the realism.

> *They [the Pre-Raphaelites] painted directly from nature itself, as truthfully as possible and with incredible attention to detail. They were inspired by the advice of John Ruskin, the English critic and art theorist in Modern Painters (1843-60). He encouraged artists to "go to Nature in all singleness of heart, rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing."*
>
> *The Pre-Raphaelites developed techniques to exploit the luminosity of pure colour and define forms in their quest for achieving "truth to nature". They strongly believed that respectable divine art could only be achieved if the artist focused on the truth and what was real in the natural world.* (Curnow, Anderson, Hackney, & Virag)

Yet compared to the photographic image, the number of anatomical errors is astonishing. I feel that, in some fundamental and important way, we fail to see what is in front of us. The artist commits these errors of perception and the observer fails to notice them. It makes me question just how much of the world around us we really see. And, more important, just how much quality is in these highly regarded artworks; how much of our perception of greatness in art is shaped by the reputation of the artist and the reverence we bring to the work.

> *"A fame as great as that of Leonardo's Mona Lisa is not an unmixed blessing for a work of art. We become so used to seeing it on picture postcards, and even advertisements, that we find it difficult to see it with fresh eyes as the painting by a real man portraying a real woman of flesh and blood ... [it would be good to] forget what we know, or believe we know, about the picture, and to look at it as if we were the first people ever to set eyes on it."* (Gombrich, 1995)

This is a very appealing plea. Unfortunately it is wrong on at least two counts. First, trivially for our purposes here, but amusing nevertheless, it appears that the model for Mona Lisa may in fact have been Leonardo himself (Shwartz, 1986). More salient for our purposes is the fact that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to disengage the painting from its aura. So much so that when the painting was stolen from the Louvre on August 21, 1911, "Thousands lined up to see the blank square on the wall; people left flowers and notes. It was like Diana's death without 'Candle in the Wind' " (Garner, 2009). This case shows how powerfully the aura of a painting is embedded in people's minds. The very idea of the Mona Lisa is hereby demonstrated to be more important than the artefact itself. Given what we know of the biology of vision, we don't even see the painting in full.

This was born out in a 2011 study in Oxford, U.K. Researchers studied the perception of artworks using fMRI brains scans and found significant differences in how the same image is perceived /regarded when attributed as the genuine work of a master or a fake (Huang,

Bridge, Kemp, & Parker, 2011); "Declaring an artwork to be a forgery completely changes the reception of a picture by the viewer; suddenly, "we can see its every flaw" (Wynne, 2006)."

> *The process of trying to match a photograph, a machine- made image, which is, by definition, anatomically correct and correct in terms of the scale of the various parts, to a painting, which is the product of an artist's perception and hand has revealed all the flaws in the painting. Far from being a sudden apprehension of all the flaws, this has been a slow unravelling as I discover that various parts don't fit. Not only have I discovered things that are apparent on close scrutiny, I have discovered inconsistencies that are only apparent upon painstakingly trying to fit one image to another. The photographic rendering of the painting makes some of these more easily seen. For example in Ophelia, the painting seems right, but in the photographic version Ophelia's head seems a little too big and too far out of the water, even though it is in exactly the same position and scale. I have made a short video documenting my process recreating Ophelia, which is submitted with this exegesis.*

Flower symbolism was important not only to Shakespeare, but to Millais' society, Victorian England. There are a number of websites devoted to Victorian flower symbolism that claim that knowledge and symbolic meanings of flowers was a popular trope in society, in much the same way as astrology is in our time.

From Wikipedia (Wikipedia, Unknown):

> *"The language of flowers, sometimes called floriography, was a Victorian-era means of communication in which various flowers and floral arrangements were used to send coded messages, allowing individuals to express feelings which otherwise could not be spoken."*

Some of the flowers mentioned in Ophelia's Speech (Shakespeare's Hamlet) do feature in Millais' painting and quite a few others. It may well be that Millais included popular flower symbolism in the painting to make references that his audience would have recognised or could at least look up in books such as "The Flowers Personified; Being a Translation of Grandville's "Les Fleurs Animées." (Cleaveland, 1847)

What is certain is that Millais has illustrated the scene described in Queen Gertrude's speech *(W. Shakespeare, Act IV SCENE VII. Another room in the castle.)*

> *"QUEEN GERTRUDE:*
>
> *There is a willow grows aslant a brook,*

That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream;

There with fantastic garlands did she come

Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples

That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,

But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them:

There, on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds

Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke;

When down her weedy trophies and herself

Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide;

And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up:

Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes;

As one incapable of her own distress,

Or like a creature native and indued

Unto that element: but long it could not be

Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,

Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay

To muddy death.

I had a great deal of trouble finding the foliage represented in Ophelia. The Tate website (Curnow, Anderson, Hackney, & Virag) *was obviously my first point of reference, but I found that some of the flowers were misnamed and many were missing. The problem was further compounded by the fact that many of the flowers are not available in Australia or not in bloom at a time when I needed them. I set up the model and took that shot in my studio. I was able to construct the willow from locally available specimens from a small creek in Lilydale and a tributary of the Yarra river in Wesburn. For the forget-me-nots I had specimens in my garden. I first encountered problems with the weeds that appear around the model in the water. Ranunculus fluitans (aquatilis) does not grow in Australian waterways. I was forced to use images from the internet. This began an extensive period of trying to identify the species in the painting and then finding suitable images to "cut and paste" into the work.*

Furthermore there are some errors in the description of this painting on the Tate Gallery website. Errors as elementary as these make me question the quality of scholarship surrounding Millais' Ophelia. These errors and other observations about the floral symbolism in the painting are outlined in Appendix One.

My Howard Arkley

Figure 26 Arkley House, Mark Boyle, 2011

I had known Howard Arkley for a long time before he "made it big". Dad and I began making frames for his paintings while he was teaching at Moorabbin TAFE in about 1986. This relationship was a working relationship which grew over time. Just before the end of his life I was making the 3 dimensional shapes for his sculptural works. We made some unauthorised frames, which were delivered to a confidential address. Howard was making copies of his works for a grey market unknown to his gallery and dealer for a bit of quick cash. I don't know the status of these works, but they may present some interesting issues for provenance in future. I was also often making deliveries to his studio and had an insider's view of his working methods. I was annoyed and angry at the popular presentation of Arkley as a drug addled carnivalesque caricature after he died. The Arkley I knew was a serious and hard-working artist, deeply immersed in the technical aspects of his craft. Itten's "The Elements of Colour" was often on top of the pile of source material that littered his workspace. This was another reason I chose to do an Arkley. I felt I understood what he was doing.

Howard Arkley's most popular images are his suburban houses. Working from real estate advertising images he created large and medium-sized works that generally feature flat colour or patterned planes usually outlined using a simple outline.

Figure 27 Arkley's perspective, as he was working from photographs, is generally very accurate. As most architectural photography uses wide-angle lens, the perspective is slightly exaggerated. For a photographer, these images look "right". This was one of the reasons I felt I could recreate an Arkley image.

Arkley painted generic suburban homes (Figure 27 to Figure 32). It might be possible to find some of the actual homes he used. It is possible that his source material (real estate advertisement photographs cut out from magazines and newspapers) might still exist. But given that these photos would have been dated well before his death it seemed unlikely that time invested in trying to locate a real model would result in a picture that was still faithful to his style. So instead, I opted to work "in the style of". There are plenty of houses from the 1940's and 1950's in Melbourne's suburbs. Indeed, that was a point Howard was making with his images. This is where most of us live. I made three different excursions through Box Hill, Clayton and Burwood gathering source images. I had a number of Arkley reproductions with me for source material and chose houses of the period with clean front yards and similar features.
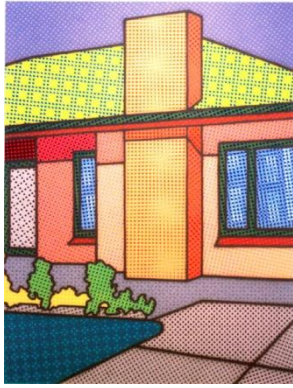
Figure 28 Howard Arkley, Actual Fractual (1994)

Figure 29 Architecturally similar to Actual Fractal, house in Box Hill

Figure 30 Howard Arkley, Family Home: Suburban Exterior (1993)

Figure 31, Architecturally similar to "Family Home", a triple hipped tile roof, house in Clayton

Figure 32 Howard Arkley, Stucco home 1991

Figure 33 Architecturally similar, concrete driveway with curved path, house in Burwood

A number of architectural features are common in Arkley paintings—concrete paths and driveways, neat garden beds, metal frame windows, multiple fronted hip and gable rooves, crazy paving, wrought ironwork, lawns, awning blinds.

Over a period of about two months I tried various combinations of effects in Photoshop hoping to translate the photographs into the highly saturated colours and flat patterning / outlined images that Arkley made (Figure 34 to Figure 39).

Figure 34 Test using Poster Edges and Posterization

Figure 35 Test using digital repainting technique

Figure 36 Test using Cut Out, Posterization

Figure 37 Test using a complex recursive series of filters, Saturation, Blur, Poster Edges

Figure 38 Test using another recursive set of operations, Median Noise

Figure 39 Test using recursive Gaussian Blur, Saturation, Median Noise

Short of repainting in Photoshop (Figure 35), I could find no combination of filters and effects that did what Howard did. After some further thought and investigation I came to the conclusion that, powerful as they are, the tools represented in Photoshop could not see the image as humans do. What Howard has done is elementary for human vision; he has simplified the image into regular shapes and flat planes with straight lines at certain angles creating boundaries. The edges of these planes are what suggest depth in the paintings through perspective. While it is a fundamental part of how we perceive the world, machine vision is completely different. Machine vision is an ongoing struggle for scientists and engineers at the moment (Davies, 2012). The image presented by a camera is a continuous tone image. Interpreting edges is a matter of finding discontinuities in the gradation of tone. But the problem is that the tone of a continuous object is unlikely to be of the same value at various parts of the image.

Looking at Figure 40 and Figure 41 reveals that simplifying the tones is not enough to find the edges in the same way that humans do. Assigning boundaries to discontinuities in tone would result in lines being drawn in the sky, in the middle of the roof planes, across the garage door (not at the edges) and in the middle of the lawn. Furthermore no distinction is made between the fence pillar and the concrete driveway. A look at the chimney in Figure 41 is particularly illuminating. While the computer algorithms are able to distinguish the edges of the bricks, the simple rectangular shape of the chimney itself is lost as the machine interprets some of the tones to be the same as the sky. I considered for a few days repainting the image as in Figure 35, but this intervention was deemed to be taking the image outside the scope of this project. My purpose was the recreate the paintings as photographs, not to re-paint them.

I did some further analysis of Arkley's colours (Figure 42-Figure 47). It had occurred to me that some of his paintings, when seen at exhibition rather than in reproduction, contain some optical trickery. Some of the paintings are difficult to focus on, and the colours dance or scintillate in front of the viewer's eyes. I was aware of Howard's use of colour theory. I thought that he might be using something more than just complementary, highly saturated colours. I had a theory that he was using colours of equal luminosity, which is known to cause this dancing effect (Livingstone, 2002). However I could find no evidence of this using colour analysis software[6].

Figure 40 Exploring the ability of machine image transformation
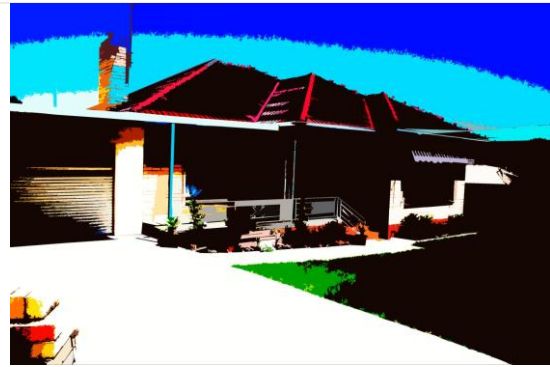
Figure 41 The computer does not distinguish edges like human vision
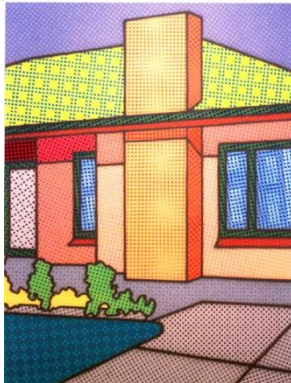
Figure 42 Howard Arkley, Actual Fractal 1994
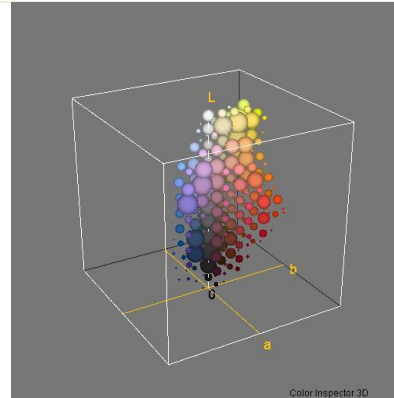
Figure 43 3D luminosity histogram of Actual Fractal. While there are equivalencies in luminosity for colours in the painting, the equally luminant colours are not adjacent, hence the scintillation is not due this effect.
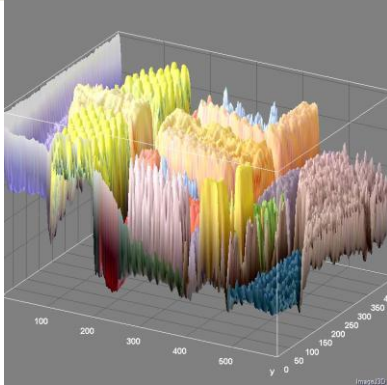
Figure 44 3D surface plot of Actual Fractal demonstrates even more clearly that adjacent colours are not equiluminant.
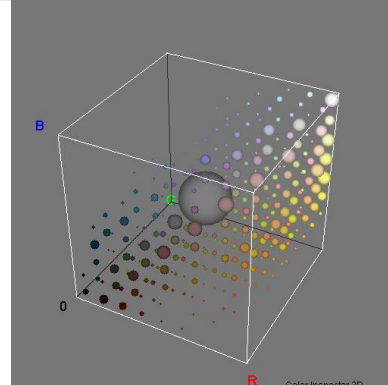
Figure 45 The RGB colour plot does clearly demonstrate that Arkley uses highly saturated colours. (colours closer to the edge are more saturated)

Figure 46 House with Native Tree 1996 Howard Arkley
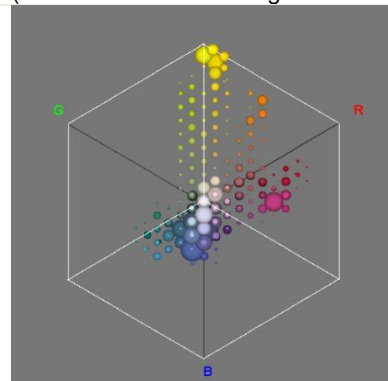
Figure 47 RGB colour plot of House with Native Tree. Once again the colours are highly saturated.

A Day Out With Jeffrey Smart

Figure 48 After Smart, Mark Boyle, 2011

When we look at a Jeffrey Smart work (Figure 49 to Figure 53) we generally think of him as being very realistic. His paintings have a quality of stillness but are very concerned with representing urban or industrial scenes. Usually light and shadow feature prominently and first impressions are of an almost photographic quality. Further examination reveals this not to be the case.

> *"For Smart the structure of the composition is as important as the subject matter, an extension of his lifelong passion for architecture. This can [be] seen in his multiple studies for works which enable him to balance the elements within the picture and create complex compositions with such equilibrium as to appear simple, their structural geometry underpinning the meticulous detail of his work."* (Australian Galleries: Jeffrey Smart)

When I was looking for a Jeffrey Smart to copy I narrowed down the field to those subjects that were achievable in terms of location. This meant Melbourne or at least Victorian scenes.

*I further narrowed the options by choosing scenes with a limited number of people (*Figure 49 *to* Figure 52*).*
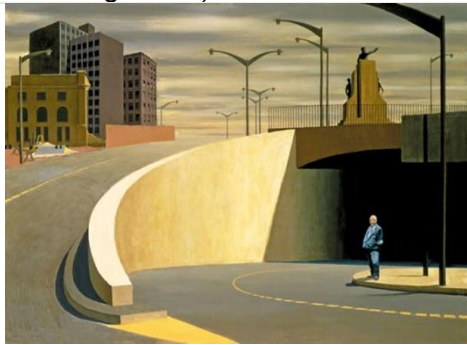
Figure 49 Jeffrey Smart, Cahill Expressway, 1962. This was not an option because the road has been remodelled.
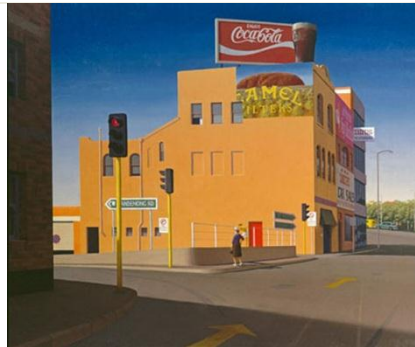
Figure 50 Jeffrey Smart, Turn Off to Dandenong, The signage and building colours are very different now.

Figure 51 Jeffrey Smart, Morning, Yarragon Siding. Research on the VicSig rail enthusiast's site revealed that this painting was impossible to reproduce. There is no siding at Yarragon.

Figure 52 Jeffrey Smart, Factory and Staff Erehwyna, 1972. This image was very appealing but I have no idea where it was painted and there are too many people

Figure 53 Jeffery Smart, The Melbourne Gate, 2002

After extensive research, I decided to do "The Melbourne Gate" (Figure 53). At first glance it appears to be eminently suited to photographic reproduction, if a little empty. The view is looking south along the City Link Tollway towards the overpass at Mt Alexander Road. I examined the lighting of the painting and concluded the time of day must have been morning with the shadows cast westerly. I made a few visits to the area to look for likely viewpoints. Although it appears like a photograph taken from the passenger side of a vehicle approaching the exit ramp, I first looked for a vantage point off the road, thinking that if I could find a high viewing platform I could use a telephoto lens to get the close view I needed. There are sound remediation walls all along this stretch, so there are no possible viewing points from beside the road. So that left the only possible option to park in the emergency lane and shoot out the driver's side window. This is an extremely busy section of road. With the Easter holidays approaching I decided to try Good Friday morning as a good time, thinking that traffic flow might be lower than normal. As it turned out, the traffic was still quite heavy.

I took a printed version of the painting with me, but to my dismay I could not find a location that presented a coherent view of what he had painted. In the end I settled on this perspective (Figure 54)

Figure 54 The view looking towards the Melbourne Gate

My Rothko
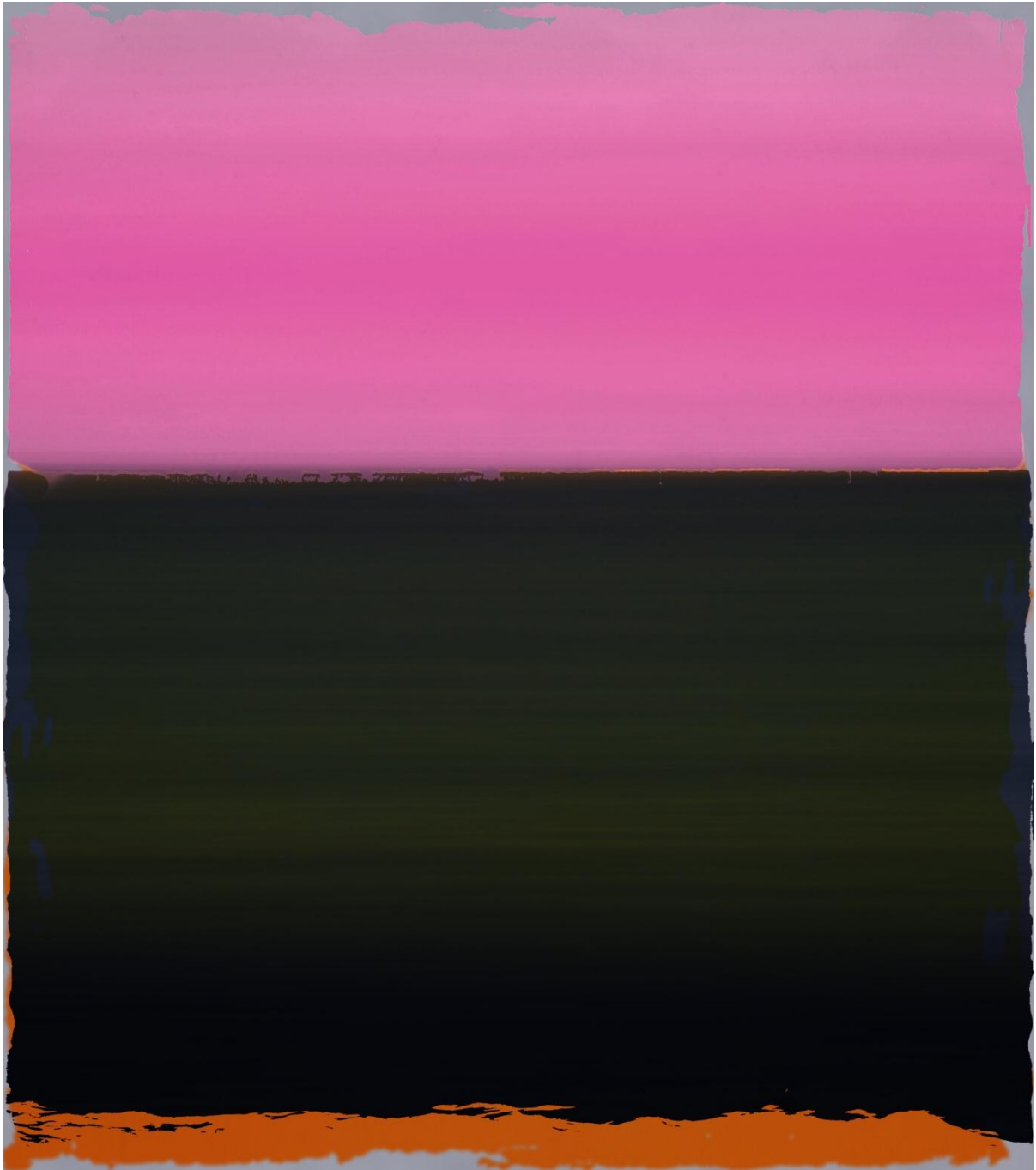
Figure 55 Mark Boyle, Rothko4real, 2011
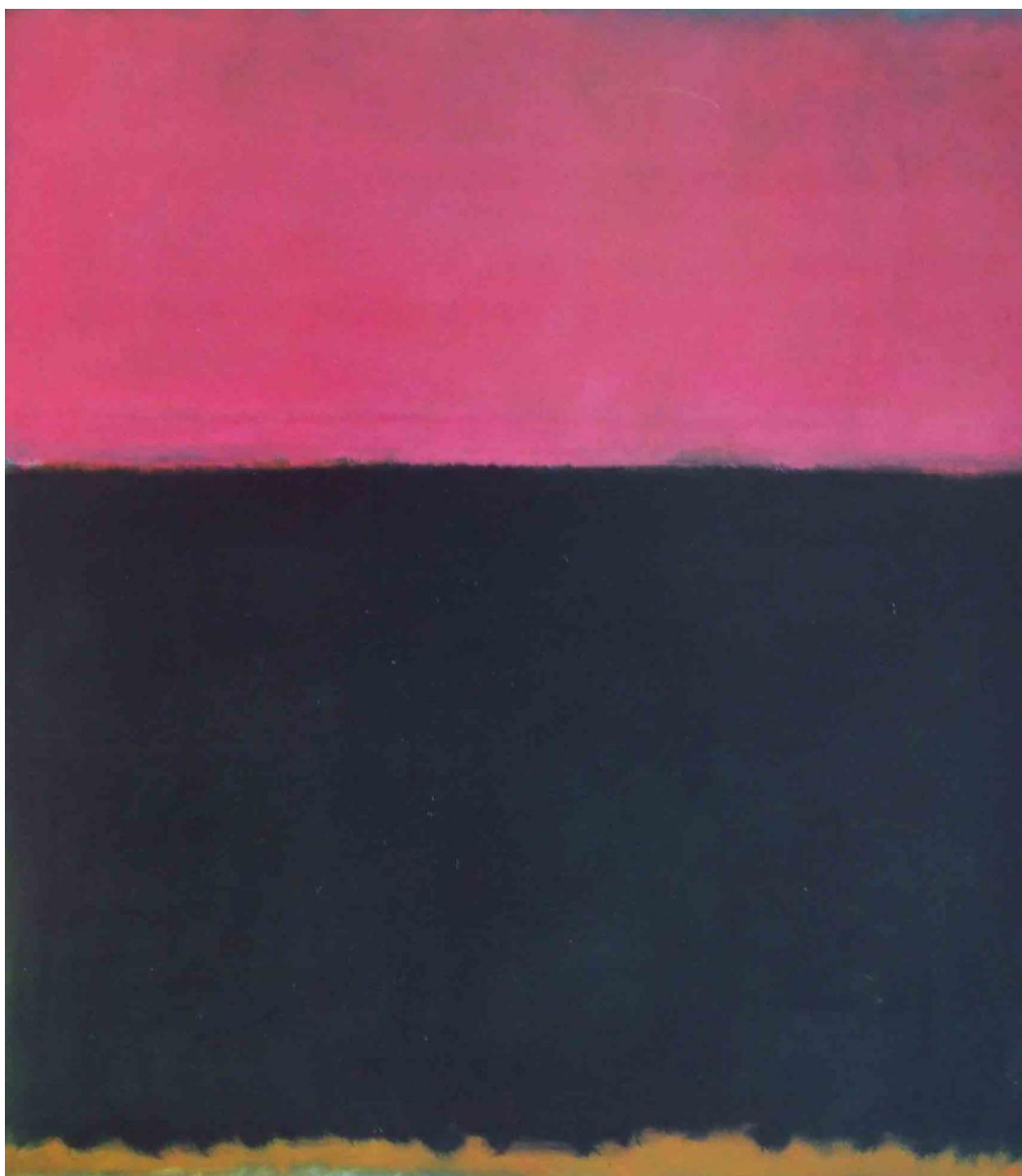
Figure 56 Mark Rothko Untitled, 1953

Mark Rothko is a romantic figure in American art. As a member of the Abstract Expressionist movement he was part of the great explosion of art in post-war United States. Much has been written about the influence of Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg, the art critics, who were instrumental in creating a patriotic cultural claim to shift the centre of the art world from Europe to the USA as a reflection of the newly emerging status of America as the dominant world power after the World War II. The status of Abstract Expressionism itself is perhaps contested, but the fact remains that two of the leading artists, Rothko and Jackson Pollock, are very well known to audiences around the world and the works of Rothko, in particular, have a romantic, spiritual aura. People are said to weep, or feel overwhelmed in the Rothko Chapel, a small shrine dedicated to his works. The huge colour field paintings are often described as "numinous".

It is interesting to ponder why we should respond to abstract art at all. Some of the more interesting speculations come from the world of science. V. S. Ramachandran[7] proposes in his concept of "Peak Shift" (Ramachandran & Hirstein, 1999), that abstract art "may employ 'supernormal' stimuli to excite form areas in the brain more strongly than natural stimuli". Following this line of reasoning, Pollock's drip paintings may evoke a stimulus similar to a dense thicket of forest, while Rothko's works might evoke horizon lines, open landscapes and seascapes or weather events (Figure 57 to Figure 58). Richard P. Taylor has put forward the idea that our engagement with Pollock's paintings may be because of the fractal nature of his work; "he must have adopted nature's rhythms when he painted" (Taylor, 2002). Briefly, "fractals consist of patterns that recur on finer and finer magnifications, building up shapes of immense complexity" and occur in nature in a vast array of places from the ragged shape of coastlines and clouds to the branching of trees. It appears that humans have a preference for fractal patterns (Pickover, Clifford, A. cited in Taylor, 2002) and it may be that we respond to Rothko's scumbled textures in the same way (Figure 56).

Certainly I respond to Pollock and Rothko. I have loved these artists since they were brought to my attention by the purchase of Blue Poles by the NGA in 1973, when I was just 12 years old.
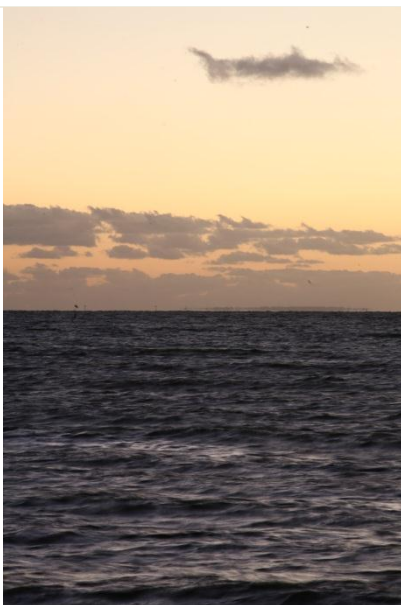
Figure 57 Rothko's paintings remind me of seascapes. This is the view at sunset over Port Phillip bay from Elwood. I took a series of these photos to develop my Rothko.
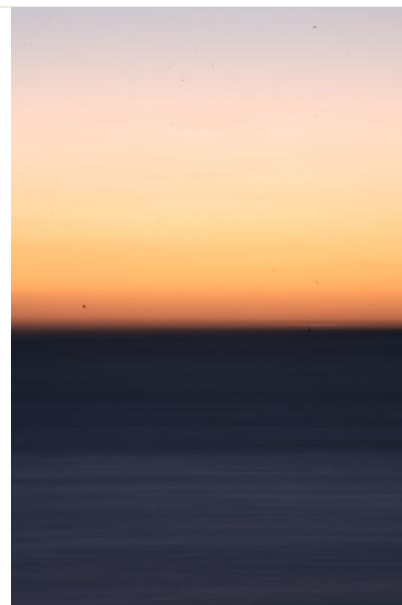
Figure 58 The same view but taken as a "swipe". I used a long exposure (15 seconds) and panned the camera left and right on a tripod to smooth out the waves and clouds.
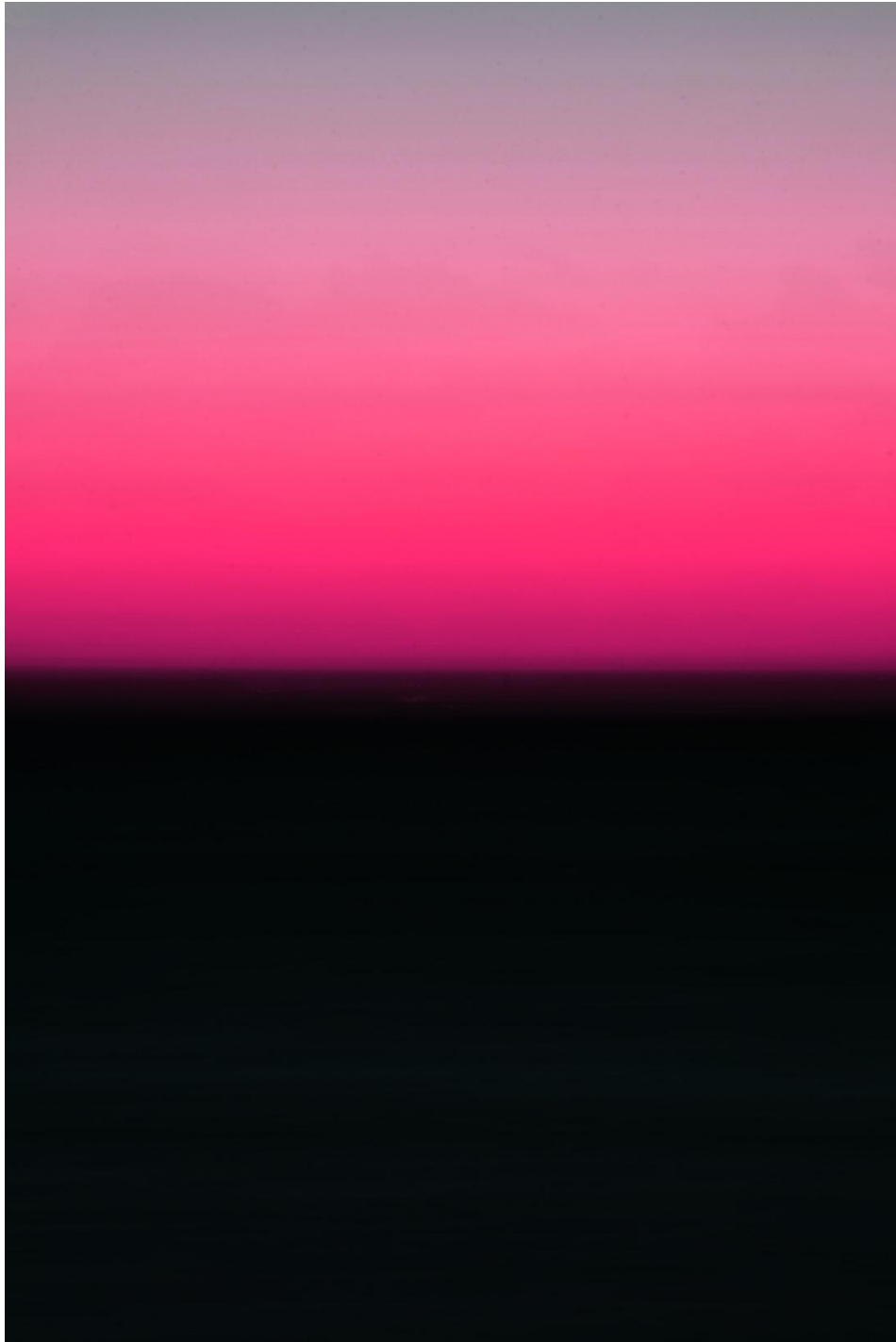
Figure 59 Mark Boyle, Rothkoesque, 2011.

I actually prefer this image (Figure 59*) to the final, more accurate rendition of the Rothko (*Figure 55*). It was part of the initial studies for the finished piece and consists of two different "swipes" (see above) overlaid in Photoshop using the 'multiply' layer mode, which is similar to the double exposure technique sometimes used on film. This has intensified and saturated the colours to a high degree. While one observer on Flickr jokingly asked if this was "some significant underexposed film", to my eye it retains just enough information to suggest a sunset over the sea.*

But, of course, it may just be that if we see something in an art gallery we treat it with a respect and reverence that we might not afford it if we see it in another context. If we consider that our perception of the value of a work of art can be radically altered by our perception of its authenticity (Huang, Bridge, Kemp, & Parker, 2011), it's not a big stretch to imagine that we might not see a painting or an artwork as a work of art if we were to see that same object in a different place.

I'd like to do a little thought experiment here. Let's take Jackson Pollock's Blue Poles as an example. Hung in the NGV[8], in a room all to itself, a strategically placed upholstered bench provided for viewers to sit and contemplate the work, and reverently, dimly lit to prevent fading due to UV light, it is clearly presented as something of great worth, something worthy of our time and contemplation. Place the same work as the backdrop to a theatre set and we might see it as an exotic, abstract pattern--fascinating and clever perhaps, but something that is a support for the main activity: the theatrical show. Now imagine that we come upon the same painting stacked carelessly among the flats behind the stage. We might not treat it with the same respect. Taking this even further, imagine we find it on the floor underneath the ladders and apparatus of a house painting crew. Some of us might be fascinated by the colours and patterns, but many of us would not give it a second look, or if we did, perhaps only to wonder why a painting crew would retain a drop sheet with such an obvious build-up of paint.

This may seem like a trivial idea, but it bothers me on two counts. First, the vast sums of money that some artworks are traded for, money that, in a world of finite resources, could be spent on education or health or infrastructure. Blue Poles was bought for $1.3m, and is purportedly now worth more than $40m (Morgan, 2003). Second, if context is so important, who makes the decisions to place works in a gallery? As art educators, universities have been pumping out graduates from fine art schools for years. Many of these are skilled and worthy practitioners with valuable contributions to make. But if, through circumstance, lack of self-promotion, lack of guile, bad luck or inability to network with the gatekeepers of the art establishment, they are overlooked for presentation in a gallery context, their careers will not progress.

In 2008 The Washington Post newspaper set up a stunt in which award-winning classical violinist Joshua Bell, posing as a busker, played his $3.5M Stradivarius violin to the morning rush hour at L'Enfant Plaza metro station in Washington D.C. He played for 43 minutes performing six classical pieces as 1097 people passed by. Only a handful stopped to listen. He made $32.17. When he performs in concert halls, average seats go for $100 and the performer can earn $1000 per minute for his time (Weingarten, 2007). This was not a

scientific experiment and it is easy to criticise the set-up. People were probably rushing to work, afraid to be late. The proportion of classical music lovers may be small in the general population. But I can't help but feel there is something at the core here. When we put this together with the study of neurological differences in the way we view artworks according to whether we perceive them as authentic or not, then there is a worrying suspicion, in my mind at least, that a great deal of the value we place on art has very little to do with the intrinsic qualities of the art work itself, and a great deal to do with how it is presented. To put this bluntly, if we cannot judge the value of a work of art in any objective way, who is to say what is art and what is not?

This is not a Magritte

Figure 60 Mark Boyle, This is not a Magritte, 2011

Figure 61 René Magritte, The Treachery of Images, 1928-29

From Wikipedia (Wikipedia):

> *"Magritte's work frequently displays a collection of ordinary objects in an unusual context, giving new meanings to familiar things. The use of objects as other than what they seem is typified in his painting, The Treachery of Images (La trahison des images)(Figure 61), which shows a pipe that looks as though it is a model for a tobacco store advertisement. Magritte painted below the pipe "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" ("This is not a pipe"), which seems a contradiction, but is actually true: the painting is not a pipe, it is an image of a pipe. It does not "satisfy emotionally"— when Magritte once was asked about this image, he replied that of course it was not a pipe, just try to fill it with tobacco."*

Magritte's pipe is widely recognised amongst people with an interest in the arts. Indeed whole books have been written about it (Foucault, 1983). It features in discussions of semiotics and signs from post-structuralist philosophy. The phrase "Ceci n'est pas une ….." has become a tagline on T-shirts, so it fulfils our criteria of being a famous image that can be rendered photographically.

I discovered that this pipe is something called a "short Dublin bent". The Name "Dublin" refers to the shape of the bowl, and the "short, bent" refers to the shape of the stem. I found an almost exact match for Magritte's pipe on an internet store, but they were out of stock. So I bought a second-hand pipe on eBay thinking I could Photoshop it into shape. When the item arrived it was better than I imagined, having been substituted by the seller for a slightly better unit who wrote:
"the stem had a bad chip in it and also when I removed the stem for packing, the shank cracked. THE GOOD NEWS IS I UPGRADED YOU TO A FAR SUPERIOR NEAR MINT BREWSTER PIPE IN GREAT SHAPE. This is a $45 pipe. My loss is your gain. It is also upon your approval and I pay the shipping both ways if you do not like it (believe me you will) thanks. Kidonia"

Figure 62 Bogart's.com.au are out of stock with the Medico Select Dublin Bent

Figure 63 eBay Item number: 200648399578, Bent Smooth Billiard

Figure 64 Setting up to recreate the Magritte image.

The pipe had a brand on the other side, so I photographed it from this side and reversed it for the final image. I had to be careful to get a highlight in the right place. The highlight on the stem was Photoshopped in later.

The modifications (Figure 60) were mainly about reducing the height of the mouthpiece to be in line with the top of the bowl, and slightly widening the metal ring. I found a similar font to the hand painted script Magritte used and changed the text to "Ceci n'est pas une Magritte", which seemed like the obvious pun. Magritte's text is a pun, a simple statement about the image not being the real object. This seems obvious, perhaps even trivial now, but it caused quite a bit of discussion at the time and its use in later philosophical discussions suggests that separating the sign from what is signified was something that was deemed worthy of considerable debate. My use of the pun is to separate the object from the maker, or the idea from the aura that surrounds the artist, and indeed the entire philosophical debate.

Hendrickje

Figure 65 Hendrickje Bathing, Mark Boyle, 2012

Figure 66 Hendrickje Bathing, Rembrandt, 1654

After the problems I had with the NGV Rembrandt Self Portrait, I felt it was important to compare it with another undisputed Rembrandt. The construction of the face in Rembrandt's Hendrickje Bathing (Figure 68) is much better than in the NGV self portrait (Figure 16).

There is a strange effect derived from what appears to be two different angles presented to the viewer. The eyes are at a different angle to the nose. To clarify, the eyes appear to have been painted with the model looking forward and down, while the nose appears to be painted with the face tilted down slightly more, and turned more towards the viewer. The proportions of the face are consistent, however, and reveal a greater degree of draughtsmanship, by a significant degree, than that revealed in the self-portrait.

The size of the eyes, their spacing, the size of the nose, cheeks and chin are all anatomically correct. The error of the eyes being at a slightly different angle to the rest of the face is consistent with a model gradually changing position. Perhaps she has let her head drop a little over time or has not perfectly replicated the position over several sittings. It is also entirely possible the Hendrickje has a flatter nose and face than my model, Sarah Groenewoud. This is qualitatively different to the self portrait where the proportions and positions of the elements are very poorly constructed.

The dress is another matter. The folds of the drapery do not read coherently or, more accurately, they are impossible. The vertical hang, painted as a series of loose folds, is not possible given the way the model is holding the front of the hem. Bunching the hem up and pulling slightly apart flattens the front of the smock. All of this appears to be invented. This is a bit like the headdress in Vermeer's Girl with a Pearl Earring (Figure 8). I suspect that both artists probably placed less importance on the accuracy of the fabric than on getting the anatomy of the subjects correct. The fabrics just need to look right, because the viewer pays less attention to the details of the fabric than the details of the face and body.

The shoulders, arms and body of Hendrickje are much more accurate than the shoulders and body of the NGV Self-Portrait. I did, however, run into serious problems with the thighs and legs. There is something quite anatomically impossible with how they have been painted. The whole of the upper body and face are consistent with an elevated view. I set the camera up at a height of about 1.9m, which is significantly higher than normal eye level, which is about 1.65m. This means we are looking slightly down on the model. I noticed this early on, in the study phase before the shoot. There is a slight fore-shortening effect created by this high angle. It is important to note that this is inconsistent with the background, which appears to have been painted from a more natural height. I think I was justified in this choice because fitting the various body parts together down to the hem of the dress was reasonably straightforward.

It is more or less impossible to get all of the elements correct in one shot. Even with the help of an assistant, we found that if we tried to get the position of one arm correct, the other arm would fall out of position, or getting the hem to hang correctly meant the model moved her

head slightly. We did, however, take about 70 shots, and worked on getting as many of the parts right as we could. So by choosing parts from about a dozen shots, it was possible to create a collage of correct parts.

The thighs and legs are another matter entirely. My first thought on trying to fit the legs to the picture was that Rembrandt had shifted the viewing height to a lower position, and I briefly considered reshooting the legs from a different position, as I had done with Ophelia's face. On closer examination, though, it became clear that the problem was deeper than that. The relationship between the knees, with the back knee being higher than the front one by a considerable margin, is only possible from a high viewing angle. This means that my original choice of a high, fore-shortened angle was correct. The problem with the legs is complicated, but I will try to explain it as I understand it.

First the right hand side leg, the model's left leg, is painted from an angle such that the inside is presented to the viewer more than is possible. In other words, it is turned slightly out, with the knee bent. The thigh is also slightly too long, or the knee a little too low. Both thighs are a touch too thin to be consistent with a fore-shortened viewpoint. The other thigh, left hand side, or the model's right leg, is not in any kind of position consistent with either the rest of the pose or the other leg. In short, either Hendrickje had a malformed pelvis or Rembrandt has made an error here.

Apart from the problems with the legs, the rest of the body is very well proportioned and drawn. This process was so easy by comparison to the NGV Self-Portrait (Figure 16) that I am led to two conclusions. The first is that the Self-Portrait in the NGV is not by the same hand as Hendrickje. The second is that Rembrandt, while a highly skilled draughtsman, did not use optical devices like Vermeer and other Post Renaissance painters (Hockney, 2006).

I am reminded of some "Photoshop flubs" I saw on the Huffington Post (HuffingtonPost.com Inc., 2011). Photoshop post-producers often attempt to idealise the human form, sometimes with strange results.

Figure 67 . Image from a "Victoria's Secret" catalogue.

"The leg bone is not connected with the hip bone"
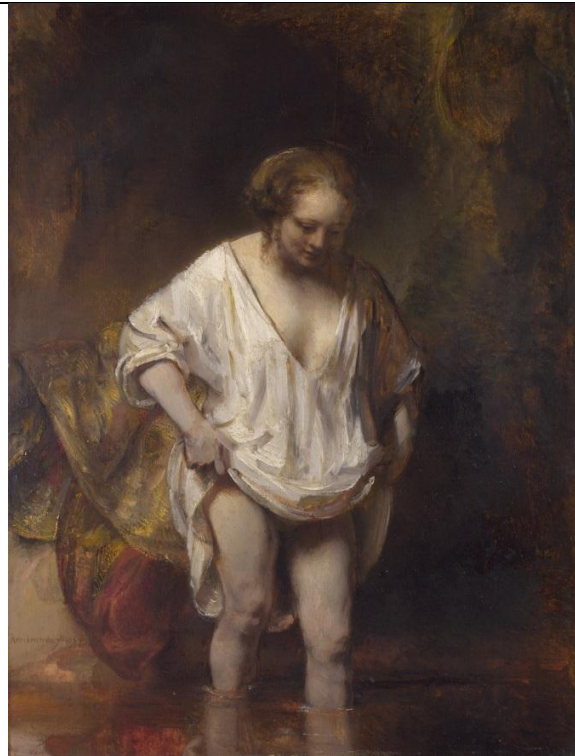
Figure 68 Hendrickje Bathing, Rembrandt, 1654

Rembrandt's legs in the painting of Hendrickje suffer from the same kind of wishful thinking that drives Photoshopping mistakes by post-producers today.

Some objectors to the first conclusion have raised the possibility that Rembrandt painted the NGV Self Portrait during a difficult period in his life. In very broad strokes Rembrandt was successful and wealthy early in his career, suffered personal tragedies with the deaths of his first three children, followed by his wife, became less popular and bankrupt later in his life, and then settled into a reflective, comparatively modest and settled later period. It is thought that the NGV Self Portrait might date from the difficult period of his life, judging by the apparent age of portrait. Objectors have raised the possibility that he might have been depressed, or even drunk, or questioning his way of making art or taking "artistic license" to play up the tragedy of his view of himself. I cannot agree with these claims. First, I think it's clear that Rembrandt was an accomplished draughtsman. My study of Hendrickje confirms that, as does the fact that we have many Rembrandt drawings. Having studied life drawing myself for five years at undergraduate level, I understand that drawing and life drawing in particular serve an important function in the development of the painter's skill, not unlike a musician's practice of scales. It is deliberate practise and study designed to develop the representational skills and techniques of the artist. The errors in the NGV Self Portrait are gross errors of scale, proportion and arrangement that would not be committed by someone

of Rembrandt's level of skill. Furthermore, the whole notion of artistic license is not valid in this case, in my opinion. As we know, amateur and student artists invoke artistic license to cover lack of skill. And, more fundamentally, it is a concept that only comes into play after the invention of photography disrupted the trajectory of Western representational art since the Renaissance. While it might be a commonplace to observe that Jeffrey Smart rearranges the scale and proportion of components in a composition until he is happy with the result, this is a modern notion that would have been foreign to painters working in the 17th century. For roughly 400 years since the Renaissance until the invention of photography, artists were trying to represent the world as accurately as they could and were judged according to their skill in doing so. Rembrandt was a better painter than the author of the NGV Self Portrait, and he would not have lost those skills during a difficult period in his life.

Others have raised the objection that Rembrandt may have intended the distortions as a way to telegraph the tentative gesture of someone entering deep, cool water. Such considerations can only be speculative without an account by the artist of his intent. That aside, what is important for us here is that the audience does not notice anything amiss until it is pointed out. Our perception then changes, in the same way as our perception of Van Meergeren's fakes once seemed perfectly plausible but now appear clumsy and wrong.

What is apparent with the painting of Hendrickje is that while Rembrandt displays the skills of a highly trained draughtsman, he is not as accurate as someone like Vermeer, who used optical devices. Rembrandt is likely to be what Hockney (Hockney, 2006) terms an "eyeballer". In other words, his skill at representing the real world comes from dedicated and deliberate practise (drawing) rather than from the use of optical aids. Also the odd little changes in angles are consistent with a model moving or failing to get the pose exactly right over subsequent sessions. This suggests to me a slower, more laboured approach consistent with "eyeballing", rather than the faster approach offered by tracing images produced by optical devices.

Conclusion

One of the questions I had at the beginning was why some artists become very successful and highly valued while other, equally talented artists remain relatively obscure. This was a sub-question to the broader question of how we value art and artworks. It arose from observation of artists working in their practise, over many years, from the standpoint of my relation to them as a supplier of painting supports.

During the process of remaking artworks, as a result of close and detailed scrutiny, and of further reading on the subjects of fakes and forgeries, expertise and its development, and the broader developments in psychological research to do with attention and perceived value, I have discovered a number of factors that dovetail together quite nicely, and I feel satisfied that I have an answer to this question. Starting with the Van Meegeren forgeries of Vermeer, it becomes apparent that attention and perception work together to construct the way we see a work of art. Van Meegeren's forgeries look clumsy to us now (Figure 11). When we look at them we see crude modelling, poor proportions, faces that look like 1930's movie stars or Art Deco tropes. We also see misquoted or misunderstood characteristics, such as the "pointille", which we now understand to be artefacts produced by Vermeer's working with optical devices, but were thought at the time to be characteristic techniques of Vermeer's painting style (Figure 10). At the time, however, Van Meegeren's paintings were taken to be lost or undiscovered Vermeers. So convincing were his forgeries that not only some of the eminent Vermeer scholars were taken in (and made to look foolish), but so were collectors such as Nazi official Hermann Goering, and the witnesses called to the prosecution during Van Meegeren's trial in 1947 (Dolnick, 2008).

This phenomenon is reinforced by more formal laboratory studies looking at the perceived value of objects, authentic versus replica toys, spoons belonging to the queen (Hood & Bloom, 2007) and at perceptions of artworks labelled as fakes or originals (Huang, Bridge, Kemp, & Parker, 2011). It is clear that our perception of the quality of a work of art strongly correlates with whether we believe it to be the work of a master or an inferior copy.

My own investigation into the works of Rembrandt, Vermeer and Millais, however, reveals that the masters have their faults as well. Millais' Ophelia has a number of serious flaws as to its anatomical correctness. The arms and head are in impossible positions. Rembrandt's Self-portrait is so poorly constructed as to add doubt over its authenticity, while his Hendrickje Bathing is skilfully constructed and proportionally correct above the waist, but the legs are impossible, with one thigh being about 4" or 5" (120 mm) longer than it should be. Furthermore, I experienced first-hand the displacement and disjuncture that comes from a

change of perception from when I first viewed the NGV Self Portrait, believing it to be the work of the great master, to my later realisation that it was the work of the artist's student.

Our perception of the quality of a work of art has, in part, to do with our appreciation of the expert performance (Dutton, 2009). The esteem of artists generally comes from the perception that they can perform feats that we mere mortals can only dream of. This does beg the question of what is happening with contemporary art, where we have seen that artists can be considered great even with the precise absence of performance. It would appear that our perception can be coloured to the extent that an empty room can be considered one of the major shows presented at the ACCA, if we are told that it is the work of an important and challenging contemporary British artist (Martin Creed, The lights Off), even when there is no physical evidence that the artist was even there or did anything at all!

The second strand of this argument comes from the beginning of the 20th century, when Vermeer's modern rise to fame began. Before then some of his paintings were ascribed to other, more well-known artists for whom a higher price could be commanded (Wynne, 2006). Once collectors began paying very high prices for the works perceptions began to change. The critics and the press join in and soon the public is convinced that these works are "priceless". Works that are suspected of being fakes are not widely advertised. It is not in the interests of the collector, who has paid a large sum of money for the work, to have that work declared a fake because the value of their investment can plummet catastrophically.

Furthermore, it seems to be in everyone's interest to promote the work of certain artists. For the collector, getting in early means buying works of art cheaply and making high returns on the investment when the reputation of the artist is soaring and their works are highly valued. For the critic or curator, prestige is associated with their discovery of new talent. They have the connoisseur's eye, they were ahead of the pack, their judgement is rated as acute, astute and their reputation rises. For the gallery, securing a new artist in its stable often means securing exclusive sales of that artist. And for the press, the arts pages can fill column inches with stories of record sales. For the artist, of course, this means they can have a career doing what they love, making art, although it should be noted that they will have to conform to what the market wants, at least to some degree. When Howard Arkley returned from his L.A. show in 1999 he had what he described as "six years' worth of commissions", nearly all for his suburban houses. This was the cause of mixed feelings. On the one hand he had a secure financial future, on the other he was locked into painting houses for the foreseeable future, even though he felt it was time for him to move on and do other things.

There are only so many collectors and only so many galleries that the art market can support. For some artists, this can mean they are overlooked. There are many artists working in obscurity who for some reason, through bad luck or lack of self-promotion skills, fail to get in on that first rung of the ladder: the gallery that can get them to the collectors, the collector that can promote their value. And, we can argue, there are other artists, who can be manufactured. Probably the most obvious example here is Damian Hirst, who was promoted early in his career by the advertising multi-millionaire Charles Saatchi. Saatchi paid huge prices for Hirst's work early in his career (BBC News, 2004), which promoted Hirst to the ranks of highly paid artists. Hirst subsequently bought back many of the works to maintain market value (Richler, 2012) in a scenario not unlike trading on the share market where buying and selling can be manipulated to raise or lower market values. Hirst's main claim to fame and prestige is in being one of the wealthiest living artists, coupled with his antics as a provocative and challenging artist, even though most of his work was actually made by assistants (Kunzru, 2012).

This is peculiar to the visual arts where there is only one unique object with provenance. In music and literature, for example, an artist's popularity and success come from the sales of copies of their work in reproduced form, recordings or books, or for musicians, ticket sales at concert performances. While there is a market in first editions and signed copies for books, this is a secondary market that comes after the prestige of the author has been established. For the visual artist the primary value attaches to the individual artwork. The market for visual artists is much more determined by the preferences and tastes of a few wealthy collectors rather than the tastes of the broad public. This is not to say that the public are without preferences and tastes. The success of blockbuster shows like the Impressionists tour in 2004 form an important source of income for public galleries such as the NGV. But it does go some way to explaining the role of the critic and the curator. Popular musicians will become popular as a result of their performances whereas visual artists are much reliant on the promotional work of critics and galleries. Hence the public's sometimes sceptical reception to contemporary art. While the public might embrace art work such as Jeffery Smart's silent urban landscapes or Howard Arkley's colourful suburban bungalows, they can be sceptical of some artists promoted as important by critics and curators if they can't see with their own eyes what all the fuss is about. Tastes can, and do, of course, change and sometimes critics can be validated. But equally, sometimes critics and connoisseurs can be wrong, and dramatically so, as in the case of Bredius and Van Meegeren.

If my hypothesis is correct, this has important implications for arts educators. How does one approach the teaching of art? Is it sufficient to rely on "the canon" or the current trend in the arts? Or is a deeper enquiry into what constitutes quality or value in the arts required? How

do we approach criticism? Is it necessary to consider the market forces in determining cultural value in a work of art? These questions are distinct from any intrinsic value that the teaching of art may have from a developmental, therapeutic or narrative (story telling) perspective but they seem to be a necessary consideration in the teaching of art history, and contemporary art.

Appendix One: Ophelia's Flowers

The following table set out the problems I identified with the TATE Gallery website.

TATE Gallery Description	My Notes.
Figure 69 Crow flowers in the foreground look similar to buttercups and symbolise ingratitude or childishness.	Ranunculus aquatilis / fluitans, common name Crowfoot, or Water Crowfoot
Figure 70 The weeping willow tree leaning over Ophelia is a symbol of forsaken love.	This is not a weeping willow; it is a non-weeping willow variety. Meaning is the same.
Figure 71 The daisies floating near her right hand represent innocence. Ophelia also mentions 'There's a daisy' in act 4, scene 5.	Meaning: Innocence.
Figure 72 The purple loosestrife on the upper right hand corner of the painting, near the edge of the frame, alludes to 'long purples' in the play. Shakespeare actually meant the purple orchid.	Meaning: determination and a strong will.
Figure 73 The pink roses that float by her cheek (above left) and her dress (above middle) and the white field roses growing on the	The flowers that make up the large rosebush on the bank are Dog Rose, Rosa Canina. "The dog rose was the stylized rose of medieval European heraldry, and is still used today. It is also the county flower of Hampshire." Meaning: Pleasure and pain.

river bank (above right), may refer to Act IV, Scene V when Laertes calls his sister, 'rose of May'. They are also included for their many symbolic meanings such as youth, love and beauty.

Meaning: Modesty, love, faithfulness.

Figure 74 The garland of violets around Ophelia's neck refers to Act IV, Scene V. 'I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died: they say he made a good end.' Violets are a symbol of faithfulness and they can also symbolise chastity and death in the young.

The plant pictured here is a Teasel.
Meaning: Misanthropy
If there is meadowsweet in the painting it is floating in the water, and a few pieces scattered on the bank.

Figure 75 The Meadowsweet flowers to the left of the purple loosestrife may signify the futility (the lack of purpose or uselessness) of her death.

Meaning: Pleasant thoughts, think of me.

Figure 76 The pansies that float on the dress in the centre, refer to Act IV, Scene V where Ophelia gathers flowers in the field ('that's for thoughts'). They represent thought and they can also mean love in vain (the name comes from French, penses).
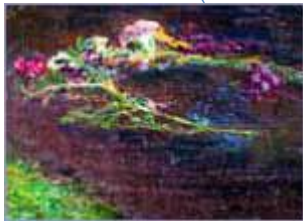
Meaning: Persecution.

Figure 77 Ophelia's sorrow is symbolised by the pheasant's eye floating near the pansies (similar to the poppy) and the fritillary floating between the dress and the water's edge in the bottom right hand corner.

Meaning: Consolation.

Meaning: Regard, unrequited love, sunshine, respect, the sun shines when I'm with you.

Other plants and flowers I found in the painting were:

- Ash Fraxinus, Common name Ash. Meaning: sacrifice, sensitivity and higher awareness
- Crataegus, Common name Hawthorn. Meaning: symbol of the House of Tudor, associated with fairies, Christ, death, illness.
- Aquilegia, Common name Columbines, Grannies Bonnet. Meaning: male adultery and ingratitude and faithlessness, and emblem of deceived lovers. It was also the symbol for foolishness.
- Rosmarinus officinalis, Common name Rosemary. Meaning: remembrance.
- Iris. Meaning: serves as a warning to be heeded, lost love and silent grief, for young girls were led into the afterlife by Iris.
- Canpanula rotundifolio, Common name Harebell. Meaning: humility, grief, gratitude, submission.
- Dianthus Common name Carnation. Meaning: (varies on colour) Fascination, devoted love, I'll never forget you, women's love, my heart aches for you, admiration, alas! for my poor heart, capriciousness, yes, no, refusal, sorry I can't be with you, wish I could be with you, sweet & lovely, innocence, pure love, woman's good luck gift
- Gentiana Common name Gentian. Meaning: Sweet be thy dreams

A more or less complete list of symbolic elements used in Ophelia

Common Name	Botanical Name	Symbolism
Ash	Ash Fraxinus	Sacrifice, sensitivity and higher awareness
Carnation	Dianthus	(varies with colour) fascination, devoted love, I'll never forget you, women's love, my heart aches for you, admiration, alas! For my poor heart, capriciousness, yes, no, refusal, sorry I can't be with you, wish I could be with you, sweet & lovely, innocence, pure love, woman's good luck gift.
Columbines, Grannies Bonnet	Aquilegia	Male adultery and ingratitude and faithlessness, and emblem of deceived lovers. It was also the symbol for foolishness.
Crowfoot, or Water Crowfoot, Buttercup, Crowflower	Ranunculus aquatilis / fluitans	Ungrateful or unfaithful behaviour. In addition, Crowflowers represent the health, fresh air, and the maiden state of a woman. Crowflowers symbolize childishness, stubborn and foolish behaviour.
Daffodil	Narcissus	Regard, unrequited love, sunshine, respect, the sun shines when I'm with you.
Daisy	Aster	Day's eye, modesty, simplicity, innocence, purity, undying love. In the Victorian era it was the flower used to indicate the future of a love match: "he loves me, he loves me not".
Dog Rose	Rosa Canina	Pleasure and pain. The dog rose was the stylized rose of medieval European heraldry, also the county flower of Hampshire.
Fennel	Foeniculum vulgare	Flattery, male adultery and foolishness.
Forget-me-not	Myosotis	Forget me not, faithfulness and enduring love.
Fritillary	Fritillaria	Persecution, also commonly used as floral emblems. The Snake's Head Fritillary (F. Meleagris) is the county flower of Oxfordshire.
Gentian	Gentiana	Sweet be thy dreams.
Harebell, Bluebell	Canpanula rotundifolio	Humility, grief, gratitude, submission.
Hawthorn	Crataegus	Symbol of the House of Tudor, associated with fairies, Christ, death, illness.
Iris	Iris	Serves as a warning to be heeded, lost love and silent grief. Young girls were led into the afterlife by Iris.
Meadowsweet	Filipendula ulmaria	Grace, refinement and elegance.
Pansies	Viola	Pleasant thoughts, think of me.
Poppy	Papaver	Consolation, death, remembrance.
Purple Loosestrife	Lythrum salicaria	Determination and a strong will.

Common Name	Botanical Name	Symbolism
Rose	Rosa	Love.
Rosemary	Rosmarinus officinalis	Remembrance.
Snow Drop	Allium	Hope, purity, renewal of life that comes in the spring, or perhaps eternal life beyond the grave.
Teasel	Dipsacus	Misanthropy.
Violets	Viola	Modesty, love, faithfulness.
Willow	Salix	Mourning, forsaken love, and freedom. Shakespeare uses the willow in Act 4, Scene 7 to symbolize the death of Ophelia.

Common Name	Zoological Name	Symbolism
Robin	Erithacus rubecula	Coming of Spring, new beginnings. Also associated with the blood of Christ, and therefore death.

Appendix Two: A Discussion of Method

Photoshop is one of a number of image manipulation programs available today, but like "biro", it has become a vernacular shorthand term. It was one of the earliest programs developed for desktop computers and as such was used extensively in desktop publishing developed in the 1990s. It has become the de facto industry standard in the publishing, graphic arts and photography industries. While later versions of Photoshop have employed sophisticated image analysis exploiting the computer's abilities to calculate sets of data quickly, many of the processes in Photoshop are familiar to graphic artists and photographers. The ability to cut and paste, paint, mask, dodge and burn (lighten and darken parts of the image), transform colours, blend and overlay images are all based on traditional methods.

For a century and a half after the development of photography the medium was thought to be documentary, that is, a form of truth telling. This was not actually the case. Photographers have always carefully composed their images, making decisions about what to include and what to exclude. They have carefully stage managed scenes to capture dramatic and iconic images. Skilled darkroom technicians have always been able to combine images and excise unwanted subjects (Figure 80). Frank Hurley famously ran into problems with the Australian War historian Charles Bean, who branded his photographs as fakes because Hurley had combined parts from multiple photographs to create a more compelling image (Nasht, 2004)

Figure 80 Over the Top, 1918. This image by Frank Hurley is composed from at least four different photographs.

Photoshop has simply made these processes easier, cheaper and less reliant on specialised labour and equipment. Because it is easier to work on a finer scale, the results are often more convincing.

I often tell my students not to believe anything in photographs any more, not because digital image manipulation is fundamentally different from what was possible before, but because it is easier to create convincing results now and the practice is much more widespread. I am not the only one to observe that Photoshop has brought the 'hand' back into image making ((Hockney, 2006)*).*

While some processes can be automated and made much easier, such as cutting out an image from a simple background, anyone who has used Photoshop will be aware that there is still a lot of time and effort involved in producing the desired results. Professional photographers find it much more cost effective to get it right in the camera than to spend hours in post-production. The practice of "shooting tethered" in the studio, with an assistant monitoring the results on a computer screen in real time, demonstrates the lengths that photographers will go to avoid unnecessary, repetitive, and costly post-production to fix avoidable errors such as poor exposure or dust on the sensor.

For some time now it has been the practice of photographers to copy well-known paintings in the tradition of painters who have always done this. It has become so prevalent that many undergraduate students in photography courses will do this as part of their studies.

It is also the case that Photoshopping images is so widespread as to cause concern in various quarters, such as the representation of women in fashion magazines and the misrepresentation of political and celebrity figures in the media and on the internet.

What makes my method different is that I have set out to faithfully reproduce the scale, proportions and placement of the subject matter of these paintings in a far more deliberate and detailed manner than anyone (as far as I know) has done before. This has involved a whole of process working method, from careful study of the painting in question to planning costume and casting models, to shooting the scene with the requirements of post-processing in mind. The resulting images have then been substantially modified in Photoshop using the painting[9] as a template. As far as possible I have tried to reproduce the painting exactly.

This has resulted in an extraordinarily detailed scrutiny of the original paintings and in the process I have discovered things about them that I think are original and only possible due to the method of trying to fit a mechanically made image (photograph) over the actual handmade painting. This was a surprise discovery and forms the original part of the research. I had intended to recreate the paintings in a different medium to distance, or dissociate, the qualities of the image from the reputation, or aura, of the original artist. What I discovered in the process was things about the images in particular, and the perception of art in general that were surprising and, I think, more profound and important than I anticipated.

Appendix Three: Costume

When I did the first Vermeer homage in 2006, Woman Pouring Water into a Bowl (Figure 2), which does not form a part of this research project, I needed to source some interesting fabrics. There were also occasions when I needed to buy white and black backdrops. I was getting to know the salesperson in Textile Offcuts in Lilydale by sight. When I took in the Girl with a Pearl Earring picture to match fabrics, I naturally asked her advice. She helped me to find some fabrics and then offered to make them up. I was delighted. I had no idea at that stage how I was going to arrange the making of the costume. Instead of payment we negotiated that I would photograph her collection of outfits. This has led to good working relationship. Lowana O'Shea is a clothing designer and maker who loves period costume and corsets (Figure 81). She also came along to the shot and acted as wardrobe assistant, arranging the clothing and helping with the styling. For the Rembrandt shoot we worked together, discussing fabrics, colours and clothing designs. She made the jacket (even having the velvet dyed to suit) and the painter's cap. I set up a tripod and lights and tried over several sittings to photograph myself using the camera's self-timer but found it almost impossible to arrange my pose and facial expression within the 12-second delay. I arranged a sitting with Lowana to do wardrobe for me and in the end she not only styled the costume but acted as camera assistant, pressing the shutter button, allowing me to work the expression and pose.

The Ophelia shoot was a big production. We planned extensively and went on a shopping trip together to find a second-hand wedding dress that could be modified to suit. Lowana and I discussed several approaches to the decoration of the dress. The painting is quite ambiguous in places and I am indebted to her instinct and knowledge of period garments for the final result. Once again she acted as assistant and wardrobe on the shoot. Finally, when it came to the Hendrickje shoot she helped not only by making the clothes but with the choice of models.

I feel a great deal of gratitude to Lowana for all her help in this project. If I did not have such a dedicated costumer on board, I think the results would have been considerably less than they are.

Figure 81 Lowana (left) backstage at the Circa Nocturna fashion show.

Adam and Amy are modelling outfits designed and made by Lowana.

Lowana trades under the name "Vanyanis".

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Glossary

aura: Walter Benjamin's sacred, magical, mystical or ceremonial value that surrounds a work of art. 13

authentic: Not copied or false, genuine, real, verified 12

bokeh: the aesthetic quality of the blur in out-of-focus areas of an image 21

contagion: From JG Frazer. The superstitious sense that an unseen essence remains in the object after contact with a person, entity or thing. 14

gliss: In music, a glissando (abbrev. gliss) is a glide from one pitch to another. Some colloquial equivalents are slide, sweep (referring to the 'discrete glissando' effects on guitar & harp respectively), bend, or 'smear'. 29

magical thinking: From James Alcock. Magical Thinking is the interpreting of two closely occurring events as though one caused the other, without any concern for the causal link. 14

pendant: One of a pair of paintings, intended to be hung together, e.g. on each side of a fireplace. 25

pointille: a decorative pattern of dots 21

provenance: The documented "chain of custody", history of the owners of an artwork that serves to prove authenticity. The status of previous owners may also add value to a work. If it was part of a particular collection, that may add prestige or "importance" to a given work 25

scumbled: Scumble; To soften the colors or outlines of (a painting or drawing) by covering with a film of opaque or semiopaque color or by rubbing. 54

tronie: Tronie is an obsolete word for character study or 'type', e.g. an old man, a young girl, a Turk, a soldier, etc. It is a distinct genre from a portrait, which is of a particular person. Tronies were a popular genre at the time, being sold on the open market, as opposed to a portrait, which was usually a commission. 25

Notes:

[1] Approximately 7 mins 10 sec mark in recording

[2] Tronie is an obsolete word for character study or "type", e.g. an old man, a young girl, a Turk, a soldier, etc. It is a distinct genre from a portrait, which is of a particular person. Tronies were a popular genre at the time, being sold on the open market, as opposed to a portrait, which was usually a commission. For example, Rembrandt did a number of tronies.

[3] A "pendant" is one of a pair of paintings, intended to be hung together, e.g. on each side of a fireplace.

[4] This was the time of the great European discoveries in Egypt begun when Napoleon arrived in Egypt in 1798. The Sphinx gripped the imagination of poets and painters since its partial excavation begun in 1816 that only uncovered the chest and forepaws. As a metaphor the Sphinx was some great, beautiful, mysterious thing buried in the sands of time.

[5] Robber baron is a term that revived in the 19th century in the United States as a reference to businessmen and bankers who dominated their respective industries and amassed huge personal fortunes, typically as a direct result of pursuing various anti-competitive or unfair business practices. It was popularized by U.S. political and economic commentator Matthew Josephson during the Great Depression in a 1934 book.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robber_baron_(industrialist) >accessed 19/04/2009.

[6] ImageJ is a public domain Java image processing program inspired by NIH Image. It can display, edit, analyse and process images. The author, Wayne Rasband (<wayne@codon.nih.gov>), is at the Research Services Branch, National Institute of Mental Health, Bethesda, Maryland, USA.
<http://imagej.nih.gov/ij/index.html>

[7] Vilayanur S. Ramachandran is the Director of the Center for Brain and Cognition, and a Professor in the Department of Psychology and the Neurosciences Graduate Program at the University of California, San Diego.

[8] Blue Poles has visited the NGV on a number of occasions. The setting I describe here was as it was displayed in 2009

[9] The only exception to this method was the Howard Arkley, for reasons that I outline in the discussion on that piece.