

Current Practices

Although I have already indicated the nature of my practices, I feel that it would be helpful to expand on them here in greater detail.

My varied practice and disciplines deal with different areas of expression and experience. Although in a sense, I do not regard any one discipline as being any more important than the others, and they all have their pros and cons, it has to be said that they do all come together in the **amalgams**. I like to keep my creative options open though, and think of the various media and disciplines as being interactive and interweaving while at the same time continuing to exist as separate and distinct entities.

Amalgams

Amalgams bring my varied expressions together in a chart-like form. An amalgam allows image and text from any source to be mixed and matched in accordance with my need or intuition at that time. Nowadays they are the interactive spine of a diverse oeuvre that blends with my general experience. I call the amalgams my 'Psychobabble' or 'Gobbledegook', where thoughts, experiences and ideas of any kind can be absorbed, before perhaps reappearing elsewhere in other forms. Having been their sole format for many years, the Sixty by Forty-Fives Lifetime Series has been superseded, and amalgams are once again varied in shape and size – most recently I have been making them digitally on my iPad Pro.



Sweets and Toys



Condolences

Drawing

I am happy to draw in any way and for any purpose that is meaningful. I explore ideas from memory and imagination in sketchbooks, and record observations there too. I use drawing as a preparatory and supporting tool for projects, and it is a discrete medium in its own right. I use the range of drawing media: pencils, pastels, as well as a variety of inks, an intrinsic part of my amalgams. Pens, especially ones designed for calligraphy, are perhaps my trademark drawing tool.



Predator

Painting (My painting hero is Pablo Picasso for his versatility and diversity).

I agree with William Blake's assertion that painting is 'coloured drawing'. I acknowledge that brushes are used generally in painting; and that it has a greater expressive range and potential than drawing (which is often regarded as more of a preparatory process), but in its essence painting and drawing are different aspects of the same thing, with overlap in terms of both tools and technique, across the two. Changes in the appearance of my paintings reflect nuances and shifts in my focus...



A Sun of the Nipple



Freya

Some Reflections on Painting

I cannot accept any rules in art, really. In the UK, especially since Francis Bacon's famous TV interviews of the 60s, 70s and 80s, if you want to make a painter feel uncomfortable, perplexed or tense, perhaps causing them to experience palpitations, you attack their work with a selection from a number of unnerving sinister Nothing Words that he weaponised. Bacon's approach to painting is suitable for his own work, but in making it a dogma – an anti-illustrational; anti-decorative one – I suggest he has done the art of his followers – especially the young, unsure and impressionable ones - a lot of damage. Here are those words, and a few others:

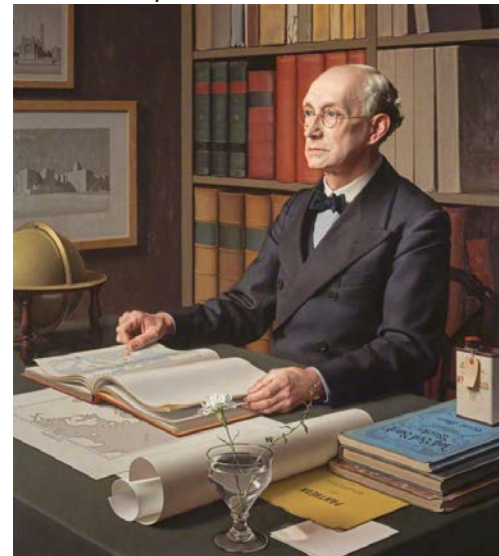
- You call the painter's work '**Decorative**'. This is a Bacon Slur. Ultimately, what does this mean? Pleasant to look at? The formal qualities of any image have the potential to cause somebody somewhere to experience pleasure. Many of Francis Bacon's paintings are pleasantly coloured, I find.
- You call it '**Illustrative**'. This too is a Bacon Slur. Any representational image must have a descriptive aspect. And even the most finely honed rendition of appearance must have something of the expressive sensibility of the artist about it. Where is the line drawn between the 'illustrative and 'non-illustrative'? There isn't such a place: surely it's a spectrum or something like that that we're talking about here...
- You say the painter's work looks '**Commercial**'. Who defines what goes into commercial art? Surely the possibilities are infinite just as they are in Fine Art. Commercial painting is nothing more or less than painting used in a particular context. The outcome is what it is. Such is the case with all painting.

- You say it is '**Slick**'. In a way this implies the previous three slurs in combination. Some might say such a work is well-prepared, as well as being confidently and competently made. In all art you can pick up the mentality, vision and sincerity in a work - and these are what really count - but even then two trained viewers may well have a different take on a piece, according to what they bring to it. Any approach involves 'the expressive potential of the materials'. A while ago, I was in London's Tate Modern art gallery where paintings by Meredith Frampton were hanging. They are certainly 'illustrative', and perhaps 'decorative', in Bacon's terms - and are definitely 'slick'. But then, I decided to go round the corner to view work by Francis Bacon. His work is very different to Frampton's and it is very powerful. But could I say that it is more powerful or profound than Frampton's? No. It is different that's all. His looser use of paint and more spontaneous approach makes no difference. The thing that both artists share is a strong vision: one that is expressed through a handling of paint that is appropriate to it.

Bacon



Frampton



- Bacon used to decry abstract painting as well. Abstract painting is clearly more than merely, what he called: '**high decoration**' (whatever that really means). It's easy to refute Bacon's assertion: give an emotion that red and black zigzags represent? And suggest feelings that undulating pale blue lines might represent... The representation of strong emotion is more than decoration.
- Other expressions - '**Overworked**' is another one - come to mind as criticisms of artwork, but I can't stay now to counter them: I have some hand-wringing to do...

Ingres



Byzantine

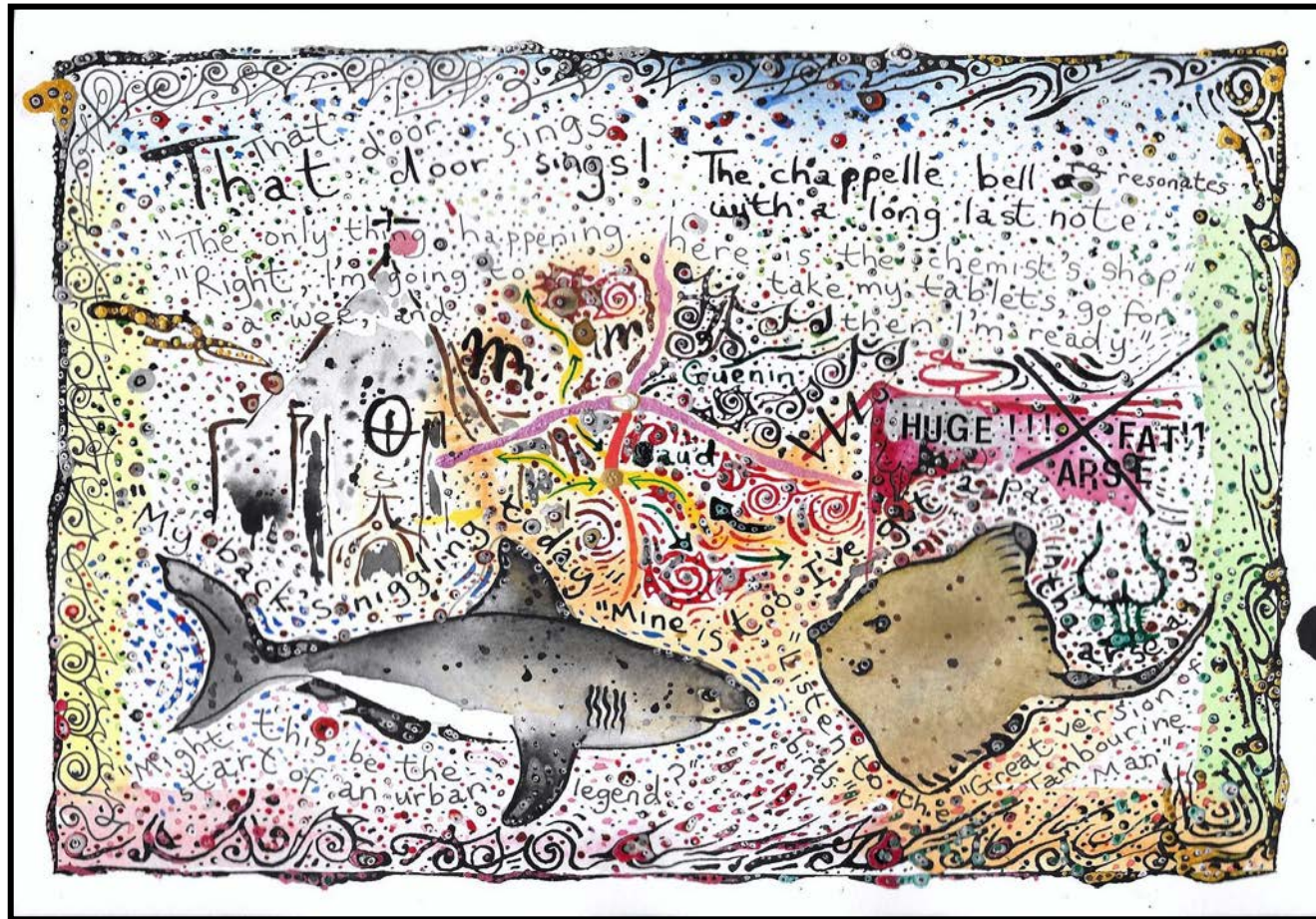


Picasso



Image and Text

We start out, let us say, with the dot; this becomes a line; then the line becomes a shape. Dot, line, other marks, and shape become pictures on one hand, and the written word on the other. They can be used in combination, perhaps to convey a message. Image and text occur in my amalgams as well as other pieces.



Found Materials, Mixed Media & Collage

I am happy to use traditional art materials conventionally when this matches my needs and intentions. Indeed, there is good sense in, for instance, using canvas as a support for oil paint. However, I do not have a desire to be old-fashioned per se. I am prepared to use any material unconventionally, and to mix materials, or even use materials that were not created to serve art. Collage is a feature of my amalgams, and is also a reflection of the importance that bringing together differing; contrasting; or even disparate elements has for me, both in the making of individual images and in the oeuvre as a whole. Despite wanting to create in and for the moment, I *am* aware and mindful of how the character of my overall body of work is developing...



Collage/montage featuring the artist performing as Mr Dracula, the new Art teacher

Photography

I have always been interested in photography. Any kind of photograph, including non-art photography, interests me. Indeed, often the most interesting and evocative photographs are the most mundane and technically flawed ones. And often the most boring ones are the *slick* photographs made by contemporary artists. It is easy for an art photograph to be boring but the most interesting ones are as strong as paintings. I advise those who hesitate to call photography art to study the work of Ansel Adams.

My photographs are taken as I go about my life. Sometimes, I may be in a situation, when for instance I am on holiday, I am unable to make other kinds of art, so I take photographs. Photography may therefore become *the* art form for that situation. I carry a small digital camera with me when I go for my daily walk, and I'll snap anything that takes my attention. Then I may realise that a subject matter is developing among my photographs over time, and that can lead to a compilation of studies on a theme and the formation of a body of work e.g. the pavement access points I have mentioned previously. I am happy to snap with any kind of camera. Indeed, some of my own interesting photographs are those that are the most unconsidered technically: My photographs are often taken intuitively and on the spur of the moment. After all, as with any other art form, the quality of the vision and imagination of the photographer are what counts ultimately.

When I get home from my walk and download the photographs onto the computer, the process continues. Using a range of software programs I enhance and distort the image, often encouraging chance effects to occur, until I feel a resonance emerge. Often it is as though I am merely bringing out what was always there, waiting to be uncovered.

Some of my photographs are taken as sketches or a collection of factual images based around a life theme (e.g. doing the washing up) that is interesting me. Photographs like these may be cut out and included in an amalgam, or perhaps a photomontage.



Poetry

Although my training is in fine art, I have always enjoyed reading and writing poetry. I studied English Literature up to A Level at school, and believe my command of English to be good enough to facilitate the writing of a decent poem. After all, my father (who taught English) told me that I have a verbal ability. That was enough for me! I write as directly as I can, and have to say precisely what I intend, however obscure and incomprehensible that may be for the reader. My poems are almost always drawn from my life experience. In poetry I have a most suitable conduit for my emotions. Also, those poems which seem especially odd are usually compilations of reportage and thought, adding up to constructions with their own surreal reality, while remaining faithful to my first-hand experience of the world. I welcome people responding to any of my work in their own way.

Back Room Boxes

**Old things,
As dead as the past,
Alive in recollection.**

Shorties

'Shorties' aka Shorts are one or two sentences snatched from the air. Sometimes they're something I've heard that I adapt. Other times they're based on a life experience. Often they read like a line from a novel or a film script. Recently I have enjoyed putting them together in compilations.

Muzak floated about the ceiling like mist from some strange artificial heaven-some grey, carpetted place of limpid water and 1970's furniture

She closed the door, alone again with The Reader's Digest and her Andy Williams recordings.

This after-image looks modern.

There's poetry in drizzle.

Short Stories

These are closely based on real life events and provide an outlet for other aspects of my experience. Although they may be embellished, becoming story-telling, they remain reportage on one level, telling of things that happened and were significant enough for me to want to externalise them.

ART ROOM DETENTION

Daniel washed dirty brushes under cold tap water, whilst gales screamed around the empty school buildings. Rain crawled down the window. Daniel's friend Craig, ate beefburger, baked beans and chips, whilst an agoraphobic mother threw boiling water at his dad.

Performance

I performed highly creative and elaborate assemblies when I was a school teacher. These were bizarre scripted shows, had props, included visuals such as paintings, and expressed things that I was thinking about. I didn't think of them as being art especially at the time, but since then have realised that they were a part of my oeuvre. I still have the scripts and one or two photos of these collaborative events. In the photographs below we see my alter-ego Eric Bloodorange, a name I derived from Viking Eric Bloodaxe, working with form 11L; and again, me performing as Dr Strabizmoo, a character whose name I based on Dr Strabismus of Utrecht...



The artist performing as Mystical Eric Bloodorange



Dr Strabizmoo

Recordings

I make recordings on voice recorders designed for meetings. I enjoy the technical shortcomings of my recording situation, and am pleased to hear traffic going by, the wind chimes outside or the barking of a dog when I play them back.

I clip a recorder to my shirt when I'm out walking to take **Sound Impressions** from my surroundings as I move through time and space. I regard them as being a rough equivalent to the photographs that I take when I'm out. These recordings are more interesting than might be imagined, and would make an atmospheric ambient sound background to an exhibition or in a large empty space. Sometimes I make transcriptions from snatches of conversation that are picked up on the recorder. These can be placed in other work such as amalgams.

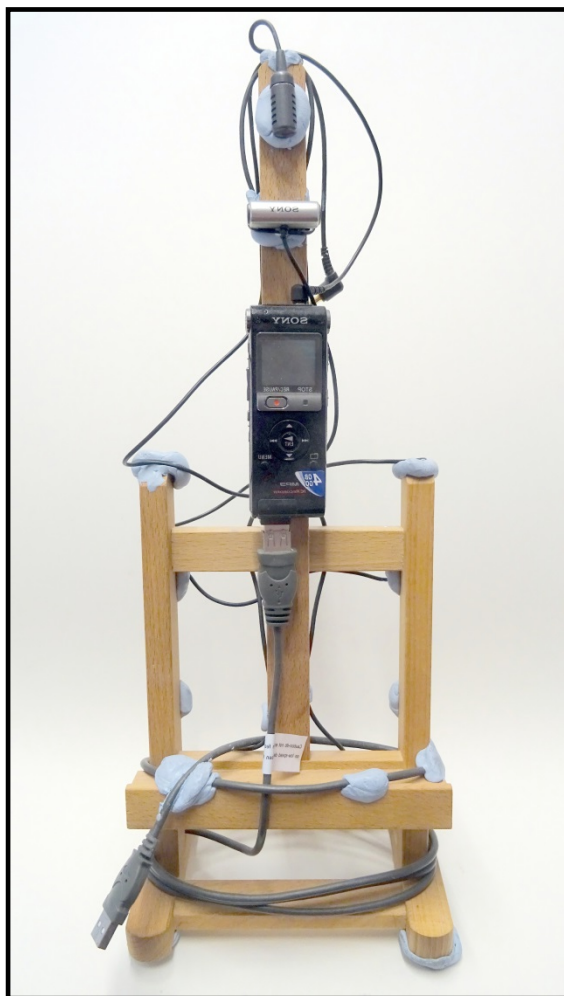
Sometimes, for instance when I'm walking round my local park, I make a '**Walk'n'Talk**' recording. These can be about anything, but usually they are concerned with something that I'm thinking about at the time. They help me put something to rest.

Recordings on **Themes** can be made in my studio as well as when I'm out. I've made recordings about my life as an educationalist as well as when I was a student. And I've made recordings on many other aspects of my life. I replay them as they are or can transcribe and quote them for other work.

Aside from the written versions of my **Poetry** there are recorded ones too. I try to speak them clearly and in a way that is in keeping with the poem, but like to make the recording quickly and intuitively. I am aware that the recordings of my poems, **Shorties** and **Short Stories** have an eccentric quality, which is the way I like them to be.

I keep a recorded weekly **Journal**. This is based on my handwritten daily diary and art notes. The sound of the pages turning and the squeak of my swivel stool are a part of the listening experience. My recorded journal entries are informal and loosely structured, as speaking as an acquaintance at first hand usually is.

RECORDING EQUIPMENT



In the studio



For recording on the move