

Ian Rowlands Artist Statement

Heatherleys Tutor Exhibition

17 – 29 October 2022

The work that I have displayed represents more than 30 years of looking, primarily at the human head. I feel that it reflects many of the influences that have shaped both my way of drawing and painting.

In the Norwich life room working from direct observation, I was taught how to look and engage with the formal problems that arise when making paintings about life. This was thanks to the guidance and example of John Wonnacott and John Lessore.

Later, at the Royal Academy schools, wrestling with the politics of the life room, my focus shifted to the human head, usually seen in close proximity and often in a domestic setting. It was at this point that I started to try to paint from drawings made from direct observation of the subject. At the schools, Norman Blamey RA was a strong advocate of this, citing that drawing can be a means of understanding, rather than just copying appearances.

Several of the works included in the exhibition, I hope, exemplify this process of drawing towards painting, primarily as visual research, permitting a start, and later in the process, helping to identify solutions to the formal challenges in representation.

Time spent drawing from great paintings has helped facilitate a drawing language that relates to that of paint and provide a map of sorts from which I can work away from the subject.

Two commissioned portraits included, are studio paintings orchestrated in the absence of the sitters. Here, I have relied on secondary sources, primarily drawing, judicious use of the camera and the valuable resource of many years of direct observation.

I have also displayed a small number of paintings made alongside students whilst teaching that are generally less resolved; their purpose being that of suggesting ways of working, in a more succinct way than words can convey.

I continue to be fascinated by the complex architecture and landscape of the human head. Drawing, in particular, provides me with the means of thinking and articulating ideas. As a form of visual enquiry, it can be a process of gathering information and importantly, a filter capable of separating the important from the specious.