

May Assessment 2015

Name: Richard Cassidy

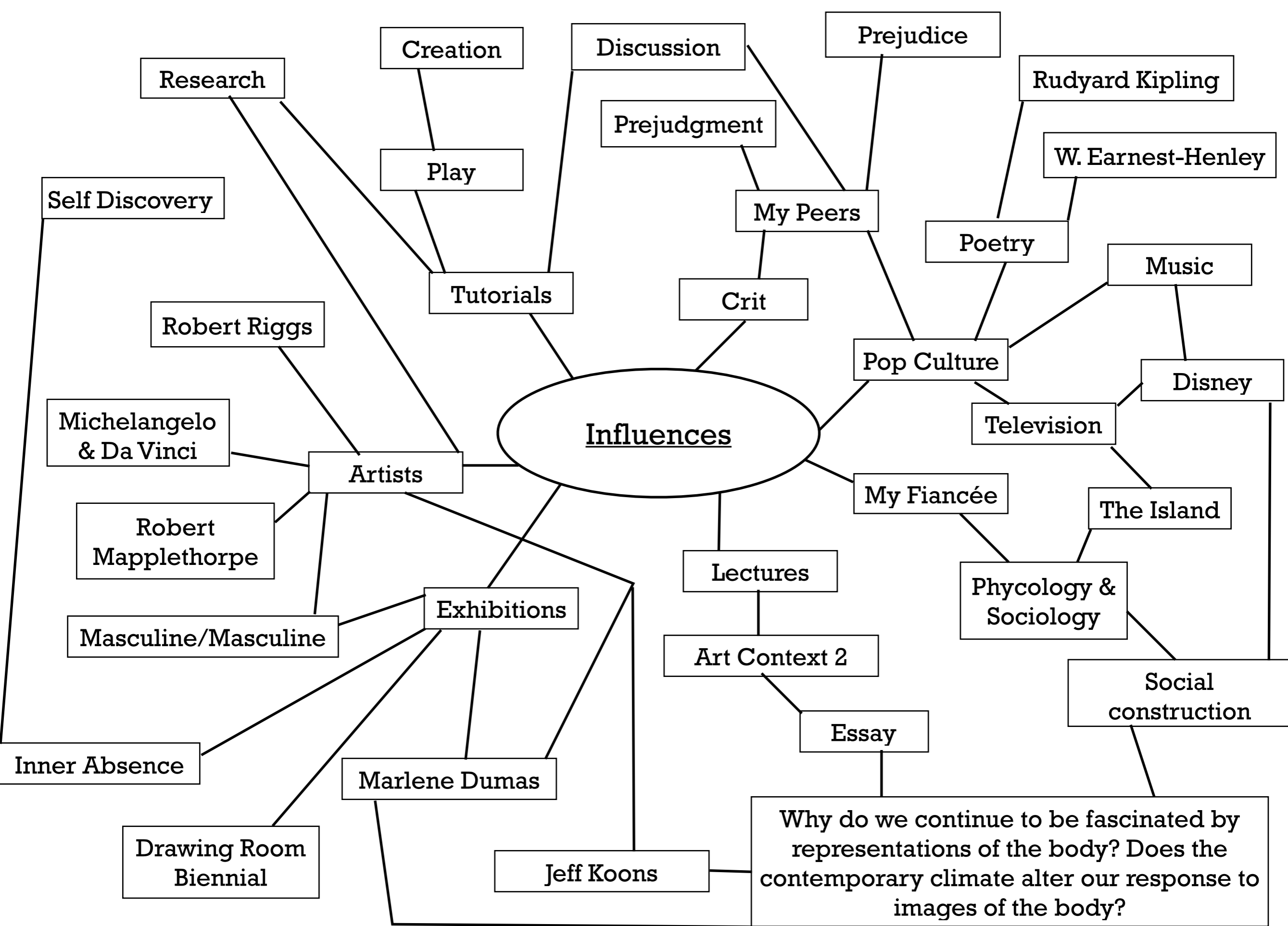
Student Number: 23025681

Course: Fine Art BA

Year: Second Year (Level 5)

Listed below are all the materials that support practice for my assessment;

- x1 Graphite pencil drawing on paper 200cm x 150cm
- x1 Graphite pencil drawing on paper 42cm x 16.2cm
- x6 Graphite pencil drawing on paper 43.2cm x 42cm
- x1 Graphite pencil drawing on paper 59cm x 41.7cm
- x1 Graphite pencil drawing on paper 41.7cm x 59cm
- x1 Graphite pencil drawing on paper 13.2cm x 19.1cm
- x1 Graphite pencil drawing on paper 28.7cm x 30.3cm
- x2 Graphite pencil drawing on paper 29.6cm x 41.8cm
- x1 Graphite pencil drawing on paper 21.1cm x 26.7cm
- x1 Graphite pencil drawing on paper 29.5cm x 13.9cm
- x7 Photocopies on cartridge paper 29.5cm x 13.9cm
- x1 Sketchbook
- x1 Exhibition Scrapbook
- x1 Scrapbook (ideas book)



Influences

Artists

Pop Culture

My Peers

Tutorials

Crit

Television

My Fiancée

Exhibitions

Lectures

Phycology & Sociology

Self Discovery

Robert Riggs

Michelangelo & Da Vinci

Robert Mapplethorpe

Masculine/Masculine

Inner Absence

Drawing Room Biennial

Marlene Dumas

Jeff Koons

Art Context 2

Essay

Social construction

Why do we continue to be fascinated by representations of the body? Does the contemporary climate alter our response to images of the body?

Research

Creation

Discussion

Prejudice

Rudyard Kipling

Prejudgment

W. Earnest-Henley

Play

My Peers

Poetry

Music

Disney

The Island

Phycology & Sociology

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Inner Absence Exhibition

Exhibition Statement

This exhibition will explore the meaning of absence, highlighting situations that have an association with the word. At the centre of this exploration is inner absence, and/or the lack of self, many of the pieces in this exhibition have concepts surrounding the human, and what happens when something goes wrong internally or socially. Expressing themselves through a range of media; paint, photography, pencil and sculpture, the artists will attempt to capture the lost and wandering essence of absence within an individual situation.

My Roles and Responsibilities

On reflection, my major contribution to the group was an unspoken leadership role. Listening and being a decisive voice for the group were key elements to this.

I was chosen to be the speaker at the symposium and I also co-ordinate a buffet which I quote 'was awesome'

Absence

noun

The non-existence or the lack of

Caroline Bajorunaite

Dan Bell

Richard Cassidy

Becky Lewis

Iain Metcalfe

India Potesta

Lewis Swain

Opening:

23/03/2015

18:00 - 21:00

Location:

CADS Works,

7 Smithfield,

Sheffield,

S3 7AR

Inner Absence Exhibition

The exhibition was held at CADS works, 7 Smithfield, St Vincents, Shalesmoor, Sheffield, S3 7AR. On Monday the 23rd of March till Friday the 27th. We held a private view on the Monday from 6pm – 9pm. Through which we had around 40 people attend. The exhibition ran smoothly which credits the whole group for working so well together. The entire experience from the set up, through the creation of work, to the actual show was the most ambitious achievement of my artist career so far. Pushing and improving invaluable skills for all of our the futures.



Reflection on Semester 2

This semester has been my most eventful of my university career so far. It has seen my practice develop in leaps and bound over just a few months. I am now working more productively than I ever have before and there are several reasons for this.

The year began coming off the back of the January assessments. I was happy with receiving a 2:1 but I was also disappointed, I still felt I could achieve more. I continued to work with a concept and theme that had proved fruitful over the last year. Through using experiences from my own childhood, I could question and make statements regarding the society that I live in. My interest and research lead me to base the first pieces I created this semester around drug addiction and drug abuse. As a adolescent I had been involved in recreational drug use, using it as an escape from life's realities. I thought by drawing from my own experiences, I could more actuarially portray the affects of the drugs within a perception of normal childlike behaviour. I was making small references to when we abuse drugs we appear to return to the care free attitude of many children; an innocent obliviousness to the challenges of life around them. I also decided to introduce some colour to the pieces, highlighting objects that may give reference to the drug the child may be perceived to be taking. I also structured the titling of the pieces to reflect these drugs as well.

However, after a couple of tutorials and a crit it became apparent that even though the works gained a degree of interest, the concept was becoming too much of an unfounded statement, founded on woolly beginnings. My own judgment had become clouded and my research was too narrow. I was so busy pushing an opinion that I had neglected subtleties within the work. Needless to say, they were highlighted in these sessions when I had no solid answer for why I had coloured the object or what implications do you think it has to show these children on drugs.

Fortunate the crit session wasn't a complete disaster. In the previous week my tutor suggested that I try simply drawing for fun and not consciously push a concept, just see where it takes me. I took this advice and it turns out it was a key turning point in the development of my practice.

I drew from images I had always wanted to draw, and some new. They all centred around a kiss, but it was just one of these pieces that really took centre stage, not for the quality of drawing but for its context. A debate regarding the famous post war Times Square kiss ensued. It is common knowledge that the sailor gentleman forced himself upon the woman in the photograph. I argued that this moment of, how I perceived it to be, passion was fine, some others did not. I found myself accosted not only for my views but I was pre-judged on who I am; male, white, young, heterosexual, middle-class privately educated. I was given a perceived position of power that 'disallowed' me to form an opinion and comment on controversial social questions.

A spark flared within me, throwing up strong feelings and questions about the society I live in. Questions that are based around the pre-judged attributes of my own self. One topic that immediately caused uproar when it was discussed was the struggle of women in art. And the sexism of men towards women. I completely agreed with the basics of equality and freedom of choice. I however, disagreed that we are inherently equal. Simply due to biology and chemistry showing various differences between the genders. However it was the social constructions that I found more interesting. Why do we have a situation where we have more women than men on our art course, lead by a female dominated staff list, yet it is men that seem to leave and become more successful, on average, than the women. Is it that people don't like female artists? Do galleries not allow women to show their work? Do male artists get paid more than female artists? Is it because of bearing children? Is the life of an artist harder for a woman? Are men more likely to get a bursary? the list goes on. It was on these foundations that I started to find that my questions were not really about discovering about sexism within art. But, where is my place in all this as an artist? Why is it that as a man I am expected to do better? What in having a penis, high muscle density and levels of testosterone mean I am more likely to achieve than all my female peers on my course? If this is the case, then what of my male peers, are they also bound to achieve great things? Or now that we have established I am in a perceived position of power as a male, which of my attributes puts me in a perceived position of dominance ahead of my own gender. Race? Class? Age? Sexuality? Physique? Education? All of the aforementioned attributes were not chosen by me, however a predisposed judgement that I am in a position of privilege was placed on me.

Opening this debate with myself further, I established that I wanted to explore my own masculinity further. What is it that I should aspire to be as a man 'with all this opportunity' modern society. My own masculinity and the search for my own male perfection, I feel are key elements within my practice at the moment. Sub-consciously I believe that they have been cornerstones within my very being for a long time. While on the self discovering pursuit of the answers to these seemingly colossal questions, I had created some of my most ambitious works to date. And although I was searching for the answers to these specific questions, I actually found myself asking many more.

Richard Cassidy

Untitled Self Portrait

Graphite Pencil on Paper 200cm x 150cm

Almost every day I will see myself in a mirror. And every time I do this, I see the person I have grown up with. Having said this I never noticed drastic changes in my appearance, the only times I see these changes are when I see myself in photographs from times gone by. Leading me on to my self portrait; exposing myself to be captured for one moment in time. Opening myself up to criticism and objectification with no extroverted, overbearing, opinionated voice to hide behind.

After the piece was completed I asked myself the question why did I choose to draw myself, and not just use a life sized photograph? I realised that in the hours that I spent drawing, I was really looking and discovering myself, more than any moment in front of a mirror. I believe that an artist, looks and see's like no other. Through which I found myself on a journey of intimate self discovery. It was a time in which I could reflect on my passing feelings and emotions. My point of view, is that my feelings and emotions are better expressed unconsciously by the strokes of my pencil than by a high d.p.i replicating my exact appearance. This hands on making approach has aloud me to begin the process of defining exactly who I am and who I want to be.

Who do I see before me?

A White, Mid- twenties, Male

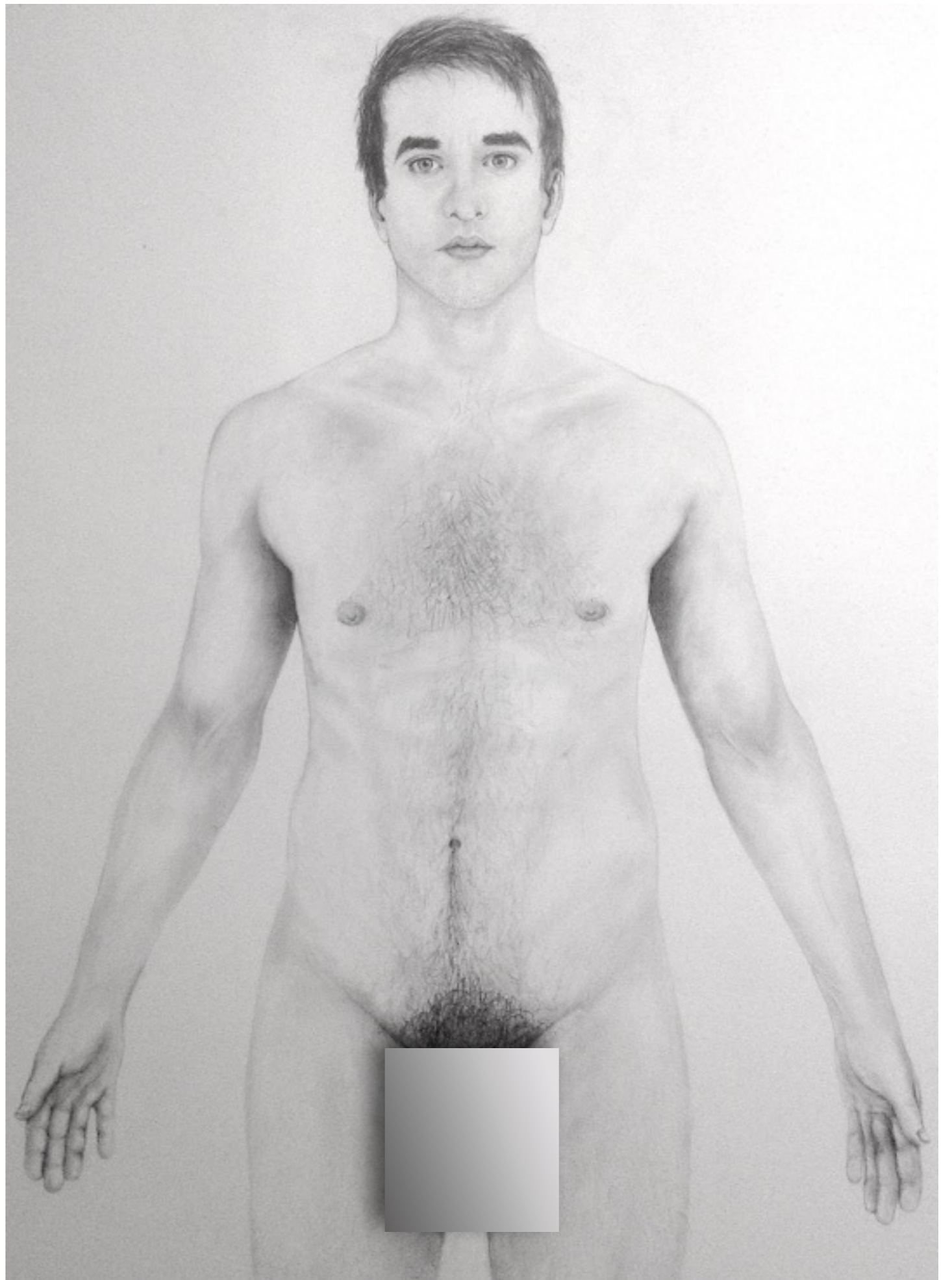
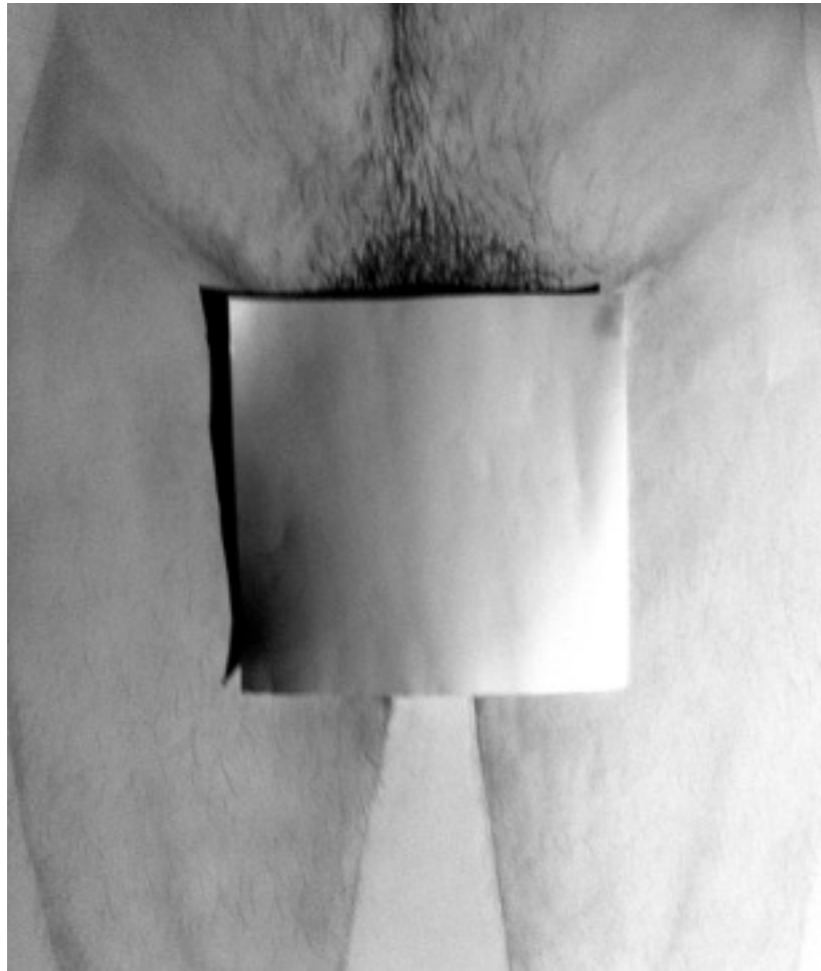
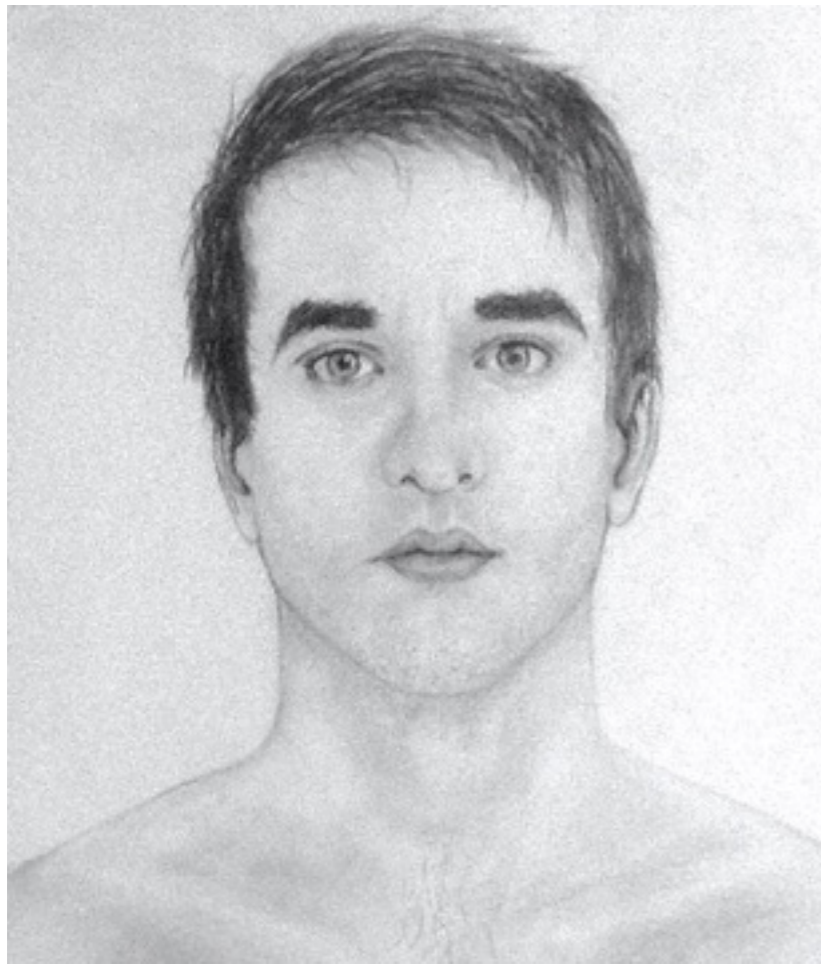
Give that man my voice and you could find out he is Middle Class, Heterosexual and Privately Educated. Without going much further we can find prejudice against him. Their is an assumption that he is wealthy as he was privately educated. And a belief that he has a Privileged position in life making it easier for him. Its understandable knowing that this man bar his age has the same basic characteristics of some of the most powerful people in the world.

The Question is he why is he different? If you are not racist why is he different? If you are not sexist why is he different? If you are not ageist why is he different? If you do not judge someone by their place of education why is he different? If you do not judge someone by their sexuality why is he different? If you do not judge someone by their social class why is he different? If you do not judge someone by their wealth then why is he different?

The difference is defined by perception. It is whatever you decide it to be. Unless you are this man you do not know the challenges he has faced in life. His challenges may be different from yours so they could be hard to comprehend. To prejudge anyone on anything is prejudice.

A startling feature to this piece comes directly for my subconscious. Highlighted in a tutorial I was made aware that I had removed my scares and piercings; arguably my history and identity. Possibly searching for male perfection, had I made improvements to bettered myself? Another important thing to mention was the paper and the genitals. Why is it covered? I was told to by my fiancée as she determined that the genitals were private to us only, in essence this suppression was understandable but still emasculating similar but for different reasoning to Queen Victoria's fig leaf on Michelangelo's David. I did however enjoy the reference to this as he was also search for male perfection within David. Experimentation and research done inadvertently through the art context essay, showed that by covering the genitals, my fiancée may have unintentionally drawn attention the genitals and heightened the works sexuality. Thusly when the paper is placed over the figures hand you immediately wonder what the figure is holding.





Richard Cassidy

Many faces of Masculinity #1

Graphite Pencil on Paper 43.2cm x 42cm

The first of an ongoing series of adapted self portraits exploring masculinity in all its variety. *Many faces of Masculinity #1*.

Masculinity is defined by the oxford english dictionary as;

A possession of the qualities traditionally associated with men

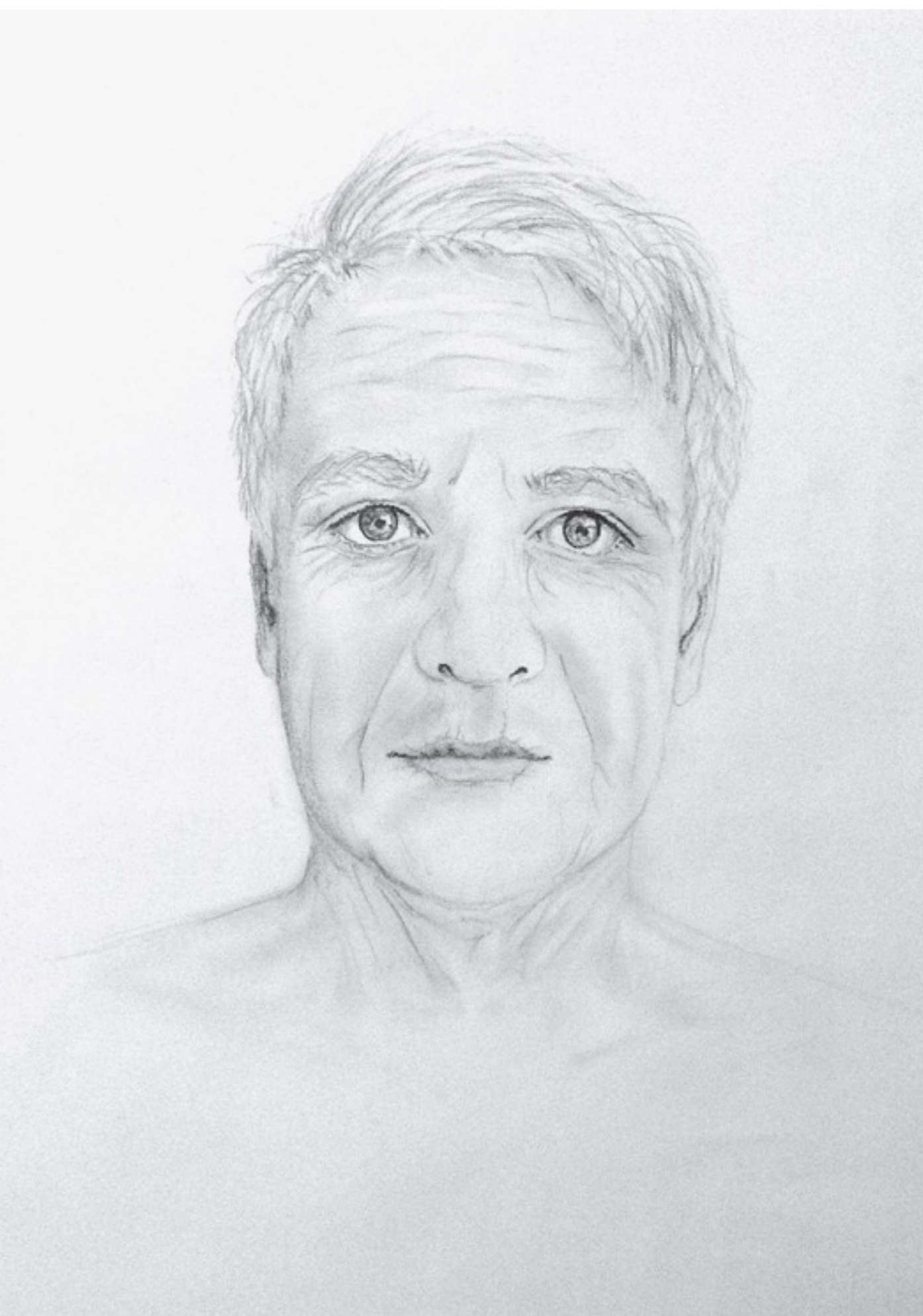
“Handsome, muscular and driven he’s a fine example of masculinity”

Self portrait representations of myself are not accurate they are made up using photographic adaption software, exaggeration of existing lines and photographs of family, friends and others for reference. All of which are mix together with my imagination.

Each adapted self portrait took a painstaking amount of time to draw, but with all this time I was able open the mind to thinking about my subject matter more thoroughly.

The *Many faces of Masculinity #1* shows an prediction as well as an adaption. The moment I finished I knew I had a piece that I would have to return to in sixty years time, just to see how close I came.

Each self portrait represents me, but within each image the viewers perception of who I am may be altered. Within each self portrait, I am looking for what defines Masculinity in Contemporary society? Is one self portrait perceived as more, or less, masculine than other? Where do I stand against contemporary masculinity and it'd ideology of current male perfection?



Richard Cassidy

Many faces of Masculinity #4

Graphite Pencil on Paper 43.2cm x 42cm

I am still trying to define exactly who I am and how I am perceived and where my place is in contemporary society?

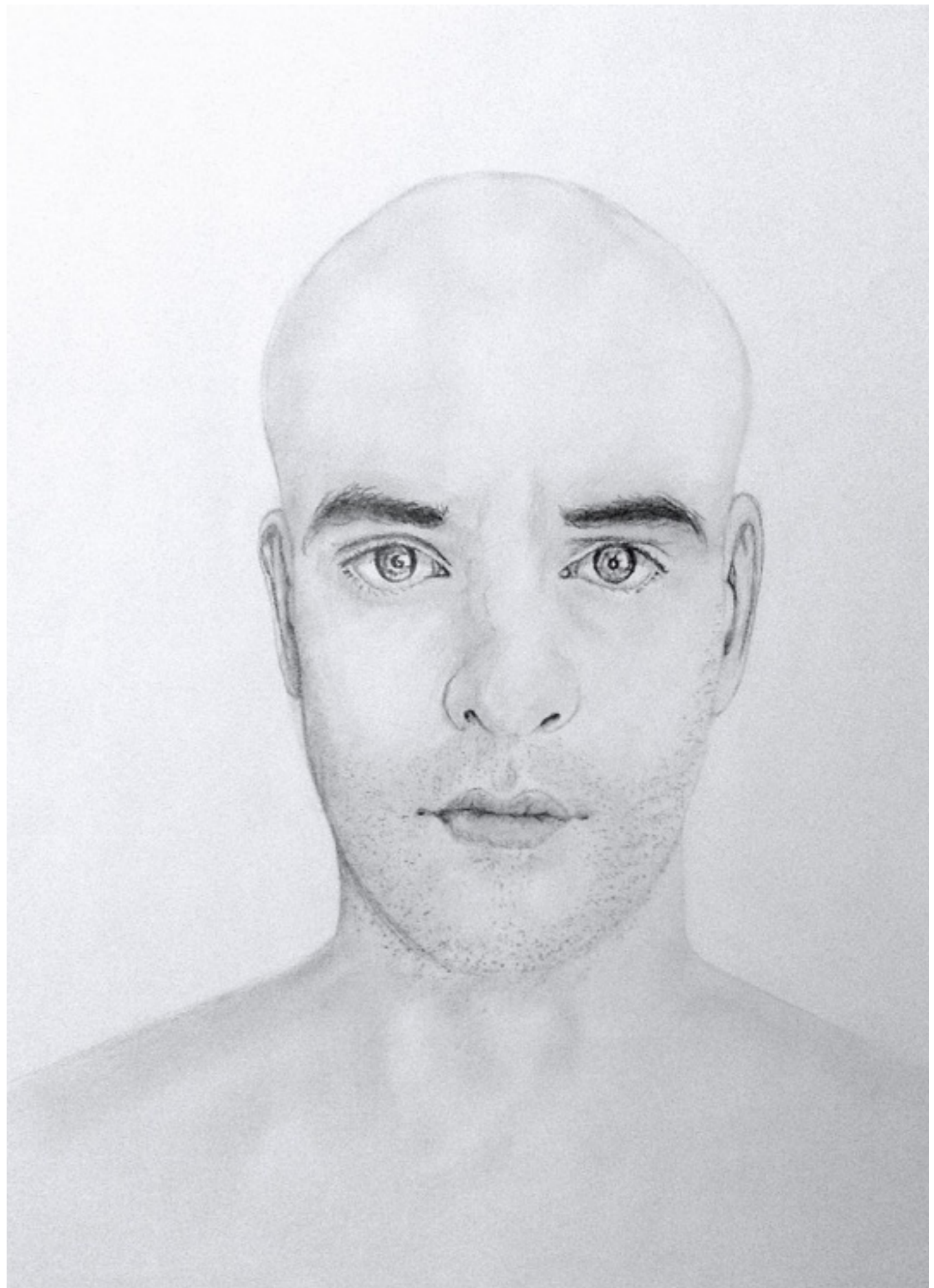
It can be argued that the series is insensitive. In that, it could be argued I am playing at the real issues of some people. Being bald as an example that you see here in *Many faces of Masculinity #4*.

It is true I have never been bald, but it is actually a fear of mine. I have I high forehead line which may be receding depending on whether I have my mother or farther family genes for hair loss. So in a sense yes I am playing at being bald but there is more there than simply play.

How would I be perceived as this man, more scary? Less approachable? More or less attractive?

Attractiveness. Throughts up a whole load more question on perception which I have only touched on before. What makes a man attractive? To whom is he attractive. Attraction is as Dr. Steven Dayan describes is primitively subconscious. It stimulates the pleasure centres of the brain, causing arousal. It is decide in milliseconds and is subjected to a composite of factors from facial symmetry to voice and posture.

For this reason it is in the perception of each viewer whether the self portrait they see before them is attractive. It is also worth mentioning although I am a heterosexual man making the image, perceived attractiveness is not then only possible for a woman. This thought process was further explored in *Many faces of Masculinity #6*, and through research into the exhibition *Masculine/Masculine* at Musée d'Orsay, Paris back from 24 September 2013 - 12 January 2014



Artist Statement

Contemporary society has socially constructed our belief systems from the moment we were born; boys wear blue and girls pink. Throughout my life, I have unconsciously been led to believe that every man should aspire to possess attributes traditionally associated with masculinity. Disney played a major role in this, often depicting the male hero to have qualities such as courage and strength. I was told by several different people “big boys don't cry”, thereby re-enforcing a belief that an adult man suppresses emotion as it is a sign of weakness. Religion, mythology and popular culture have all also played a part in creating and ideology of male perfection within me. It is now the question of how do I bear the pressure of unconsciously being measure up to this man? But moreover is the perfect male that I should aspire to be actually flawed in his construction? Do I still need to be like this fictional man within contemporary society? After all supermarkets, computers and other machines have alleviated the need for physical strength and power, yet many men still aspire to have these attributes.

The notion of masculinity and male perfection has been the subject matter of many artist throughout the ages. Only going back a short way Leonardo Da Vinci looked at the Vitruvian man and Michelangelo his David, Edward Muybridge looked at the male in motion, Robert Mapplethorpe like wise with Lucian Freud studied the nude male form. This short list merely skims the surface of artists that reference to masculinity and male perfection.

To attempt to answer some of these queries I have started to make self portraits; exposing myself to be captured for one moment in time. Opening myself up to criticism and objectification with no extroverted, overbearing, opinionated voice to hide behind. After the first self portrait was completed I asked myself, why did I choose to draw myself, and not just use the photograph i had taken for reference and print that life sized? I realised that in the hours that I spent drawing, I had been really looking and discovering myself, more than any moment in front of a mirror. I believe that an artist, looks and see's like no other. Through which I found myself on a journey of intimate self discovery. It was a time in which I could reflect on my passing feelings and emotions. And in my point of view, is those feelings and emotions are far better expressed by the unconscious strokes of my pencil than by a high d.p.i replicating my exact appearance.

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