



Volume Two: Portfolio

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Portfolio Introduction

This Portfolio of Practice sits alongside my Master of Research by-project thesis. This portfolio consists of two sections, Phase Two and Phase Three, and should be read alongside sections Phase Two and Phase Three in my Analysis and Discussion chapter of my thesis.

Before viewing my portfolio, please familiarise yourself with my Artist Statement in my thesis, as this will provide background to my practice.

Through my creative practice I engaged in several months of visual analysis and artistic creation, which ultimately led to the production of six research portraits. Creating the work now contained in this portfolio has surprised me. My studio practice and visual work, up until the start of this research project, was almost entirely traditional, and included very few digital elements, assemblage or collage. And yet, through these physical interactions with my data, a new practice has emerged for me, and a new, visual language has intuitively evolved, visible within each of the six portraits. My portfolio is ordered chronological, so you should be able to witness this.

On the last page of my portfolio is a portrait I created of my research project, in an attempt to capture the journey I have undertaken over the last two years. This was an unplanned, additional outcome.



My Materials

Columbian Printing Press (on loan)

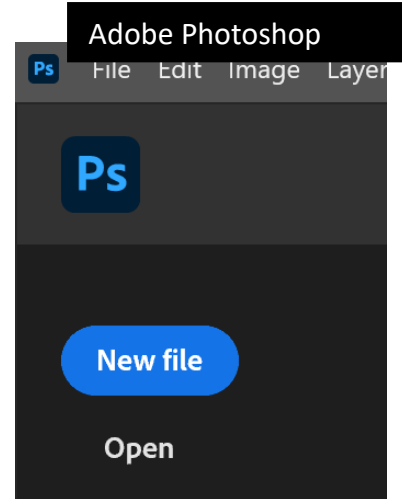


Gelli Plate (borrowed)



Paper

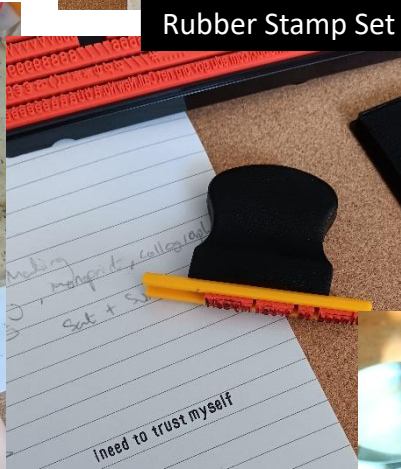
Adobe Photoshop



My hands



Rubber Stamp Set



Gouache Paints and Brushes



Pressed Leaves



Where I Work

The work I have documented in this portfolio was created in my studio.

My studio is located in the High Peak, a rural area of Derbyshire.

It is my second home.



Tom

Tom is a sound artist, he creates, records and performs music and audio/visual projects. Tom also delivers workshops for all ages, across different institutions, from youth centres to art galleries. Tom practices from his studio in PRIMARY, Nottingham, which is where we met. Tom described creativity as a source of positivity in his life, that grew into a profession. His practice is physical, *'it's wires, its cables, its big speakers, its big instruments'*, but also embodied, *'it's a nervous system thing'*.

During the studio visit, our conversation spanned Tom's journey into the creative industry, from connecting to his ancestors, marginalisation and creative industry challenges, to work based injuries and hearing problems. Our conversation touched on the spiritual, energetic, embodied and rhythmic elements of his practice, and the challenges he has faced that have shifted his ways of working.

'Once I've plugged everything in my brain and body will go into a certain frame of mind that is very loving. But in that lovingness, it's also prepared to be ferocious, be passionate, to be intense to be... whatever it needs to be, but that happens through the container of gentleness... when you've set up your base, then your contained to be whatever you need to be in that moment, all within the loving, compassionate container of that gentleness, you know?'

Creating Tom's portrait shaped my creative process going forward. His description of gentleness being a container stood out to me the moment I heard it, and again when transcribing his interview. I am grateful to Tom for sharing this visual concept with me. I allowed this idea to guide me, with few creative constraints, I experimented with different physical mediums, later layered together in photoshop. As a final addition, I added the polaroid photograph I took of Tom's computer. He had asked me to take a picture of a photo of him, a photo that captured his joy whilst performing.

I have mapped out my creative process of creating Tom's portrait on the following page.



Tom, on change and documentation as a mirror:

'I can go back to a recording from 10 years ago when I was a different person but still like that's like a log of all the people that you have been.'



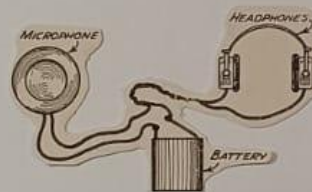
Digital edit - Layer in a photo here. Mirror+Joy To represent Tom searching for a photo of himself showing joy whilst performing.

Tom spoke a lot about rhythm and energy, it felt important that his portrait embodied this. I used visual elements similar to a fast flow of water or sound waves to represent this

'once I've plugged everything in my brain and body will go into a certain frame of mind that is very loving'

'all within the loving, compassionate container of that gentleness you know?'

COMPASSIONATE



I took a gel press print and cut it into two connecting pieces, separated on the final portrait, to create a container for Tom's words.

This separation also could also visualise a before and after, representing the transformational moments - in life and practice- that Tom shared with me.

CONTAINER

Diagram found in a vintage book by accident (fate?), included to represent Toms practice of making sound and instruments.

OF THAT

GENTLENESS

A common pattern in Tom's speech - to check in that I understood.

YOU

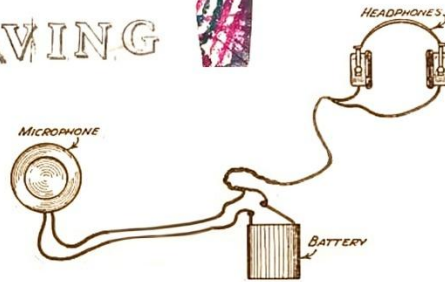
KNOW?

west African tradition and that's like a super long tradition every year and its like. Originally its like that a failed slave rebellion, a slave rebelled, they tried to like it didn't go well for them, you know? it failed, so there and it's a 300 year old tradition and I think wow, so there's a village called Harris, it's a plantation, so my on and it's a very strange thing, it's a direct link, so on are my genes come from essentially and a long line of th n't, has existed there for 300+ years in physical human am writing the script. Architects of desire, architects o t, the spirit of that you know? That tradition in mind, d h is deep and I have to respect about that and about th promise of today so that, that's where like where I tip i g sure I respect my ancestors, respect that, they make to do it. I get to do it with these great instruments, I h it, do you know what I mean? I've been given, I've be en given a lot, you have to give a lot. Do you know wha possibility. The last thing I'll say, last thing (laughs), wh parents, I used to live with them I grew up spent lots o who failed I had to go back and live with my grandpar

Tom's Portrait



COMPASSIONATE



CONTAINER



Annie

I began work on Annie's portrait next.

Annie is a multidisciplinary artist based in New Mills, in Derbyshire, where she works from her home studio. Annie's practice spans music, textile and photography. Annie described joy as a foundational element of her practice, and with the intention of never having to live an ordinary life, she found herself moving into a self-employment.

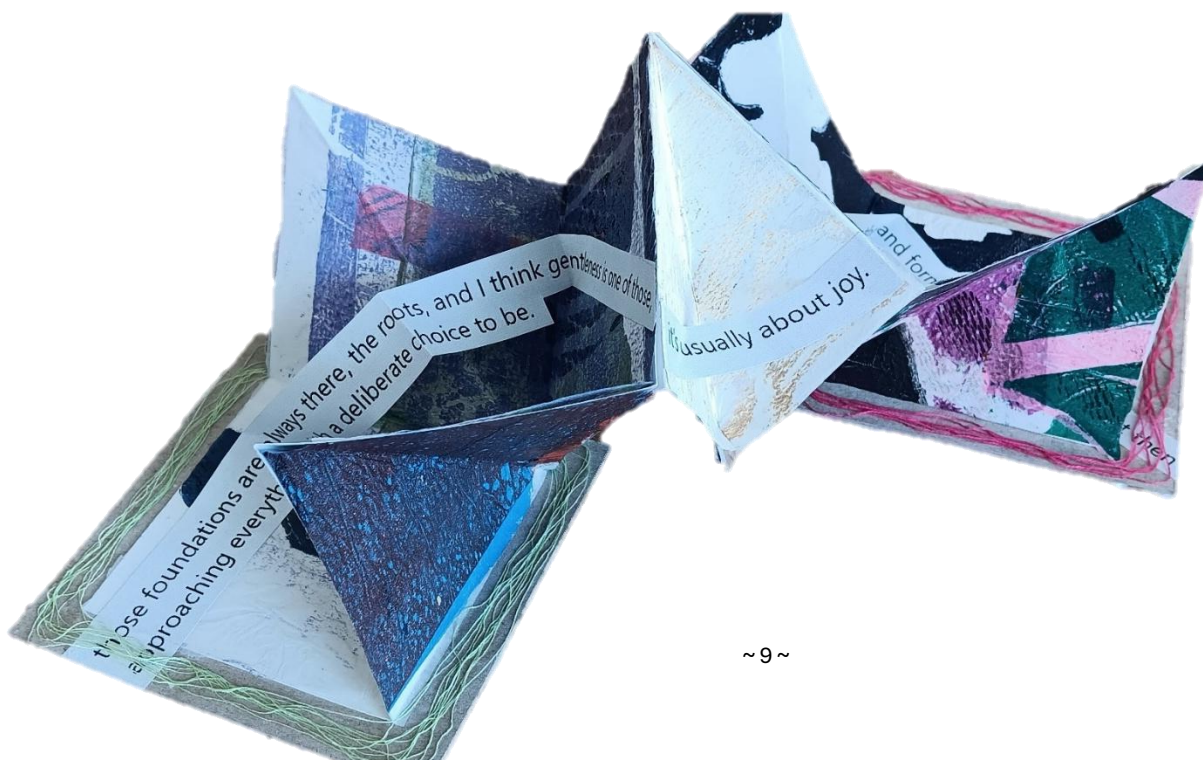
Annie spoke to me about her work before self-employment, within the retail sector, where she found herself performing as a 'corporate white witch'. We spoke briefly about the town in which we both live and work, about the community of women artists here. She spoke about her own journey with confidence and competitiveness, and how gentleness has provided parameters for how she practices, how she approaches life and how she makes decisions.

'I think gentleness does help you with that. It makes you think, am I approaching this in a way that I approve of? Do I approve of my own actions? And if I don't maybe there's a different way of doing this or approaching this. It helps keep yourself to account and to see yourself a bit more clearly.'

Annie's portrait began as a 3D object. I created a lotus fold book, to hold three lines of dialogue from her interview. The final portrait contains three focal points. I hoped these would capture her multidisciplinary practice, in a way that honoured these layers, not choosing one over the other to spotlight.

'I've been told multiple times over the last few years to just focus on one thing and be really good at that, and yeah, I could be, but I could be really good at 3 things as well. Weirdly I think by choosing to be a little bit more gentle, a little bit more careful and self-aware I've actually become more ambitious for myself'

I have mapped out my creative process of creating Annie's portrait on the following page.



I liked the idea of representing Annie's home, where she hosts other artists for dye club, but I chose to represent this with one of my photographs rather than a drawing.



Unlike Tom's portrait, Annie's was made up of multiple physical elements, as well as some trial and error.

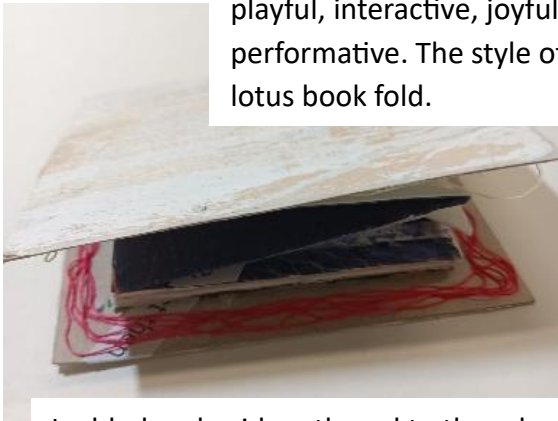
'those foundations are always there, the roots, and I think gentleness is one of those, approaching everything with a deliberate choice to be'

'Gentleness, joy, passion, all come together and form the foundation of what then becomes the practice'



'It's usually about joy'

This 3D object was unexpected – playful, interactive, joyful, performative. The style of folding is a lotus book fold.



I added embroidery thread to the edges of the object, as a visual representation of Annie's textile practice.

I spent time carefully observing the wool Annie had dyed.



Annie's Portrait



Ryan

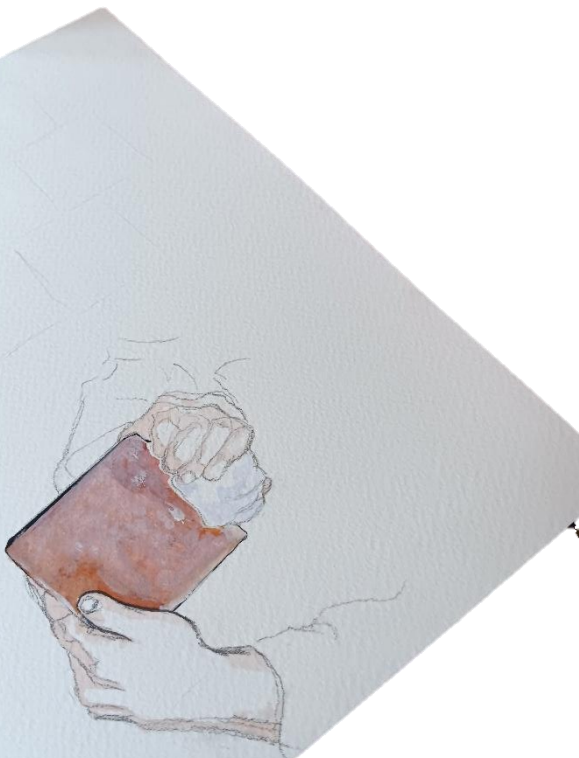
Ryan's practice sits within or between art, architecture and materiality. His work often revolves around finding materials that spark his curiosity and following that curiosity through a learning process that is playful and explorative. His current practice revolves around the renovation of his home with his partner in Nottingham.

During the interview, Ryan sat and cleaned tiles for his floor as he spoke. He spoke about how his practice has changed since buying the house and how the renovation has become a creative practice in itself, *'I don't see myself painting again.'* For Ryan, the value of his practice comes from the history of it, the origins of something, the forgotten processes and the relationships we have with materials. When asked about gentleness, Ryan mentioned that gentleness for him guides his decision making, which materials he chooses to work with and how, *'if I wasn't being gentle in this particular moment with the tiles in particular or any material I work with, I probably wouldn't be working with it.'*

As I repeated this portrait making process for the third time, it became easier to trust that the process I was developing would lead to the right outcome, and I began to experiment more with my techniques and mediums.

Ryan's portrait contains the most layers out of all six, created physically but layered together digitally. I followed Ryan's mantra that he shared with me during the studio visit, an adage from his university days, *'trust the process, make sure that, even if you don't know where you're going or within something, material research exploration can take you to where you need to be. Going into the unknown and just trusting that things will work out in some way shape or form that kind of level of discomfort is just the position your in.'*

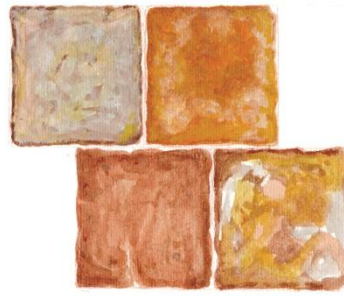
I have mapped out my creative process of creating Ryan's portrait on the following page.



A direct quote from my interview with Ryan. Summarizes his practice of working with older materials and processes.

I followed Ryan's advice whilst creating his portrait, the mantra of 'trust the process' fed into creating all six portraits

'An adage from uni days,
Trust the process'



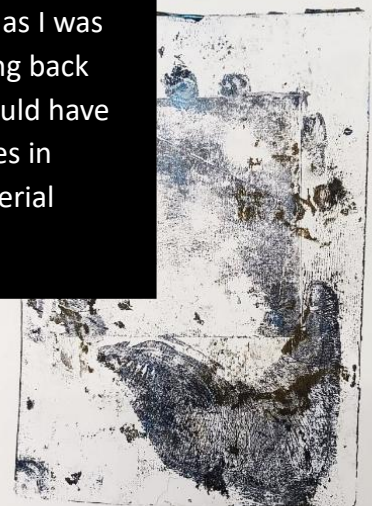
Ryan's portrait began with a medium I'm familiar with, watercolour. But after painting a few sketches, I felt it was missing depth, and began experimenting.

Before Ryan's portrait, I hadn't considered the portraits to be collages.



'there's a period of research that is material exploration and either that's something that's new to me or as I was talking about with the tiles going back and researching how things would have been done in relation to the tiles in relation to the kind of that material methodology.'

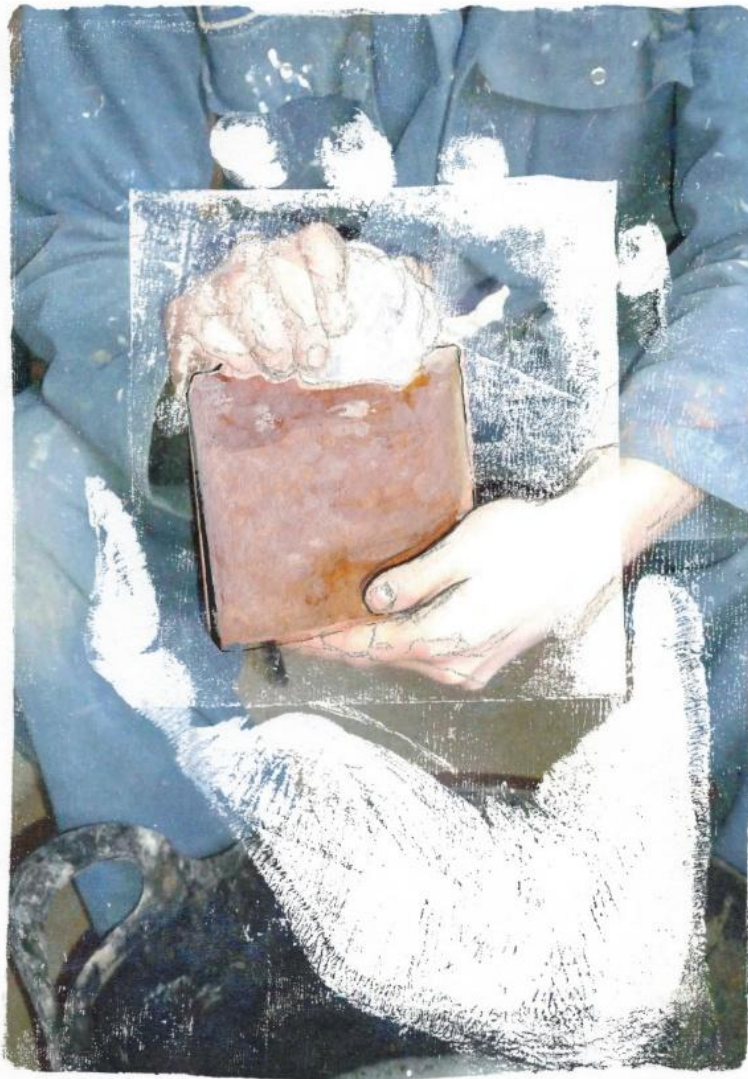
I took a reference photograph of my own hand holding a tile for the portrait. Ryan's practice is very much about maintaining, uncovering and passing down tacit knowledge. During his studio visit he asked me to feel and clean the tiles and I felt it was important to represent collaboration in his portrait.



Ryan's Portrait

the value in terms of my practice

comes from the history of it.



Trust the process.

Sophie

Whilst Ryan's portrait emerged through trusting the process, Sophie's emerged through trusting myself.

Sophie is a creative practitioner based in Manchester. Alongside her own artistic practice, Sophie works within research, mental health and wellbeing through creative engagement, and has recently begun her Phd. Sophie creates process art using a range of different techniques, including felting and printmaking. Her work often explores nature, most recently symbiosis, trees and lichen. Sophie avoids waste within her artmaking and incorporates sustainable processes and materials where possible.

She talked me through her journey from living very minimally and often throwing away work that didn't turn out how she had intended, to filling her space with objects that inspire her and honouring the work she makes, rather than moving on quickly to something else. Sophie's practice, amongst other qualities, is a caring practice, *'care for myself, in the way that I do things and do work... care in materials that I use I think there's a financial constraint in that as well but I do try to use sustainable materials... caring and being gentle in the things I depict as well... I think there's something very caring in taking away the idea of there being a final product'*

Sophie also spoke to me about her experience of living with OCD. Sophie had been diagnosed with OCD a year and a half before the studio visit, around the same time that she began investing more time into her creative practice and set up her platform, Analogish. For Sophie, *'gentleness to me is like how I treat myself within what I do and the practice how I treat the materials I'm using. I think that I, someone with ocd, I have like intrusive thoughts about self-harm... so a year and half ago I started using the implements I find difficult working with and I found that important to do in a gentle way'. In my fieldnotes from the studio visit, I had made a note of something Sophie had said, that I hadn't recorded, 'I need to trust myself'. I felt this sentiment was focal to Sophies practice and her journey, it is through trust that Sophie acts gently with her self and her work.*

Unlike the other five portraits, Sophie's includes all the lines of dialogue I felt showcased the intrinsic value of her practice. Sophie's practice is one of reuse, and of not letting anything go to waste, and of honouring the process. I had to make use of each scrap of printed transcript, just as Sophie would. *'In the past I would have just screwed it up thrown it at the wall in and thought oh its not worked what I wanted not worked but I think there's something very caring in taking away the idea of there being a final final product of it being iterative.'*

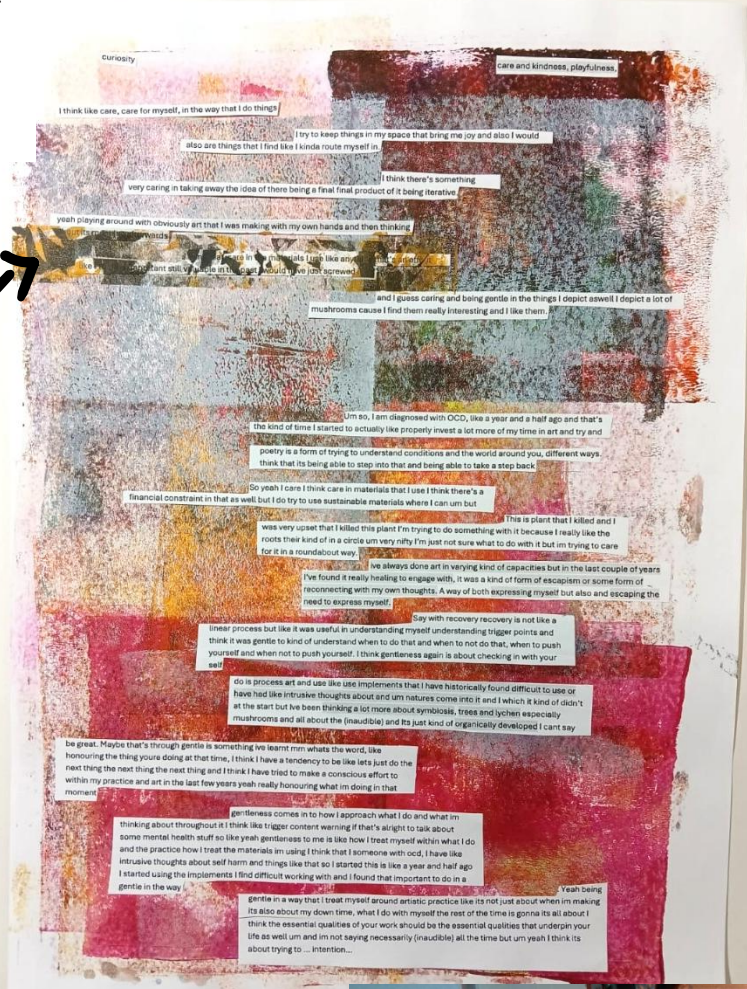
I have mapped out my creative process of creating Sophie's portrait on the following page.



Avoid waste – use everything I have made in Sophie’s portrait in the final portrait. I included each line of text I cut from her transcript.

This printed pattern is from making Emma’s portrait – no waste!

Gel press prints used in the background and as a border – a medium me and Sophie have in common.



'I need to trust myself'

The repetition of this phrase felt too intense, I later digitally imposed this print over the portrait, so the quote can only be seen slightly.

This print began with a scrap I had in my studio, that I had kept from another project, and couldn't face throwing away.



Polaroid photo taken of Sophie’s book case, featuring items she makes, collects or was given

Sophies Portrait



curiosity

care and kindness, playfulness

I think like care, care for myself, in the way that I do things

I try to keep things in my space that bring me joy and also I would also are things that I find like I kinda route myself in

I think there's something very caring in taking away the idea of there being a final final product of it being iterative

yeah playing around with obviously art that I was making with my own hands and then thinking

and I guess caring and being gentle in the things I depict as well I depict a lot of mushrooms cause I find them really interesting and I like them.

Um I think yeah, yeah I guess I mean kindness as well, self, self development, its good to be curious and try and work things out as you go

me is taking the time um its also I guess there's something quite powerful in gentleness because it feels to me like a decision to be for me to be gentler

Um so, I am diagnosed with OCD, like a year and a half ago and that's the kind of time I started to actually like properly invest a lot more of my time in art and try and

poetry is a form of trying to understand conditions and the world around you, different ways, think that its being able to step into that and being able to take a step back

So yeah I care I think care in materials that I use I think there's a financial constraint in that as well but I do try to use sustainable materials where I can um but

I need to trust myself

was very upset that I killed this plant I'm trying to do something w roots their kind of in a circle um very nifty I'm not sure for it in a roundabout way

capacities but in the last couple of years it was a kind of form of escapism or some form of my own thoughts. A way of both expressing myself but also and picking the to express myself.

Say with recovery recovery is not like a linear process but like it was useful in understanding myself understanding trigger points and think it was gentle to kind of understand when to do that and when to not do that, when to push yourself and when not to push yourself. I think gentleness again is about checking in with your self

do the process art and use like use implements that I have historically found difficult to use or have had like intrusive thoughts about and um natures come into it and I which it kinda of didn't at the start but Ive been thinking a lot more about symbolis, trees and lichen especially mushrooms and all about the (inaudible) and its just kind of organically developed I cant say

be great. Maybe that's through gentle is something Ive learnt from whats the word, like honouring the thing youre doing at that time, I think I have a tendency to be like lets just do the next thing the next thing the next thing and I think I have tried to make a conscious effort to within my practice and art in the last few years yeah really honouring what im doing in that moment

gentleness comes in to how I approach what I do and what im thinking about throughout it I think like trigger content warning if that's alright to talk about some mental health stuff so like yeah gentleness to me is like how I treat myself within what I do and the practice how I treat the materials Im using I think that I someone with ocd, I have like intrusive thoughts about self harm and things like that so I started this is like a year and half ago I started using the implements I find difficult working with and I found that important to do in a gentle in the way

gentle in a way that I treat myself around artistic practice like its not just about when im making its also about my down time, what I do with myself the rest of the time is gonna its all about I think the essential qualities of your work should be the essential qualities that underpin your life as well um and Im not saying necessarily (inaudible) all the time but um yeah I think its about trying to ... intention...

Emma

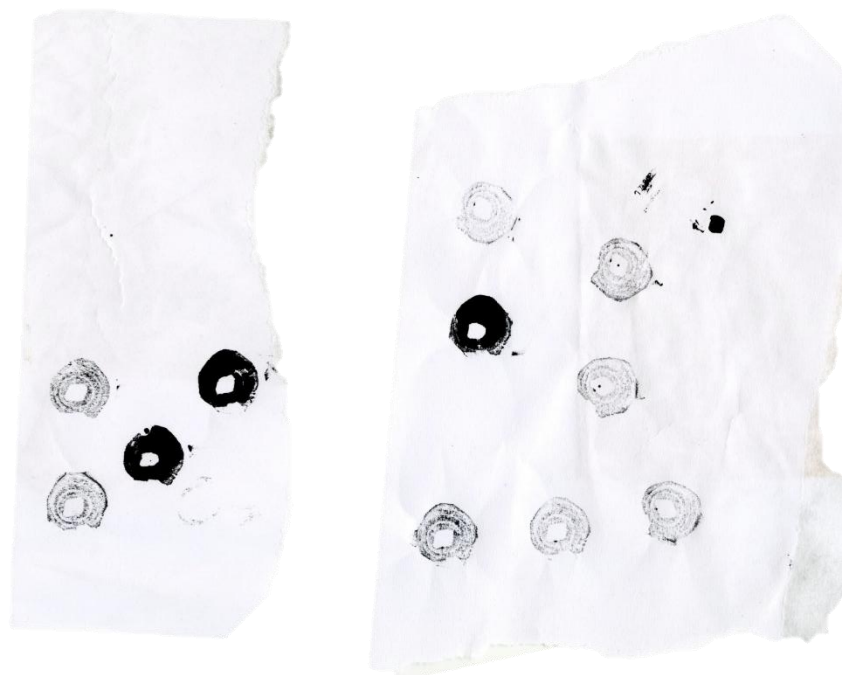
Emma is a creative practitioner based in Shrewsbury. She uses her practice to explore and make sense of her experience of the world. Emma often works with natural materials, such as found items or fibres like wool. Her work is visual, as well as spiritual, and she also provides tarot and oracle readings. When we met, Emma was also working parttime as a cow herder.

For Emma, gentleness is a natural way of being, something she has found others have often seen in her or her work. Emma's practice has evolved over time, during and after university and the pandemic, from living in Manchester to moving back home to Shrewsbury. Our conversation spanned creative practice, roller derby, cow herding, confidence, identity, different perspectives and energies. Emma spoke about being gentle with herself, being courageous, and becoming brave enough to be her *'true, actual self'*.

Once we arrived at Emma's home, we had tea and she showed me various items she has made, found or been given. We sat on the floor for the interview, before we began, Emma read my tarot. After the interview, Emma took me to meet a large tree behind her house, one that had been an important part of her life.

I found creating Emma's portrait quite challenging, each version I thought was finished felt wrong. There was something in the back of my head saying, this isn't the one, keep making. I let go of what I thought I wanted to make, the portrait already knew what it would be anyway. *'There was a moment there like a moment of choice can I relinquish my idea of what I wanted to make and like make it so that this is what it wanted to be. I think as well when you work with natural materials it has its own energy in it and sometimes you're just the guiding force like you're not necessarily the creative way your just sort of guiding the idea and I think that's really cool.'*

I have mapped out my creative process of creating Emma's portrait on the following page.



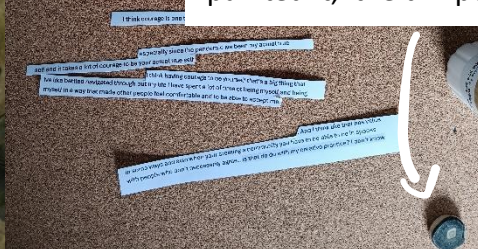
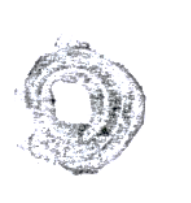


Emma's space was filled with small gifts and reminders to herself. I started with drawing these.

'I think it like comes through because I have a gentle way of being in the world'



I took a print from the small branch cutting that Emma gave to me. I also painted it, it felt important.



I think ultimately there's a creative urge sometime and it has to be made I love that when that happens something is wanting to come through and your a conduit for that kind of



'I feel like it's a constant exploration I guess it's kind of interesting. sometimes it can be hard to put into words.'



Other attempts at Emma's 'finished' portrait



Emma spoke about having a strong connection with the tree behind her house, she took me to visit it.

Emma's Portrait



Hanna

Hanna's studio visit was the final visit I undertook, and her portrait was the final piece I created.

Hanna is a socially engaged, environmental artist. Her work is centred around sustainability, working entirely with biodegradable materials, like foraged plant fibres, Hanna creates through cordage, rope and knot work. Hanna lives and works in Edale, in the Peak District. Although we met at her studio, the heat that day led us out on a walk and into some shade by a nearby river. When we met, Hanna was two months into a year of funding from Arts Council England, during which she would explore and study knot work. Hanna's practice takes her to festival and symposia, she often collaborates with other artists and occasionally takes on commissions for hand fastening ropes.

Hanna's practice didn't begin with rope making, prior to 2019 Hanna was working with bronze, with exhibitions every month and features in publications, she had little time to reflect and rest. This contributed to burnout that led her to put a hold on everything, with some projects from 2019 still unfinished. This difficult time led Hanna to reassess her work life balance, and her understanding of success, for herself and for her child.

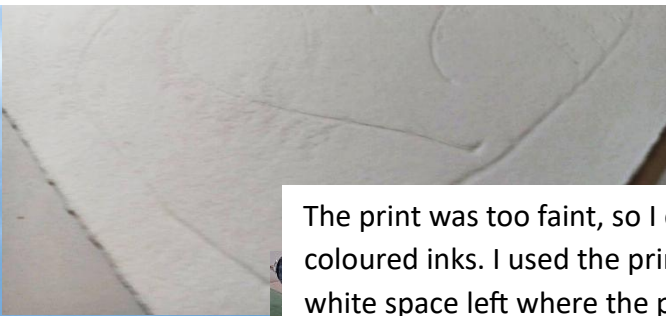
Hanna spoke to me in detail about her current rope making and foraging practice, she braided grass together whilst we spoke. She told me about a book that has inspired her practice, Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer. Within the book, *'the author writes about the native indigenous code of conduct it's called the honourable harvest to my knowledge that's the first time its been written down because it exists in oral practice'*. The honourable harvest contains instructions for foraging, *'never take the first, never take the last, ask permission before you take anything and um only take what you need and leave some for others'*.

For Hanna's portrait, I interacted with the lines of dialogue differently. Hanna is a ropemaker, following her lead I braided the words she had said, carefully so as not to tear the paper. A word that Hanna had said had stuck with me, 'abundance'. Abundance is a word I have explored in my own personal practice, to mean too much, with a negative connotation. Hanna spoke of abundance with such hope, that there is always enough, as long as we don't take too much:

'this is the thing I can name definitely that reshaped my ideas around reciprocity and how I am being in this world and when I encounter plant fibres for example I collect a lot of what grows around here, I collect docs, I collect grasses, I collect sometimes bark of trees I collect rushes I collect ferns, brambles, I mean I can name so many things I collect around here. However, I never take all of everything I find, I always leave a lot'



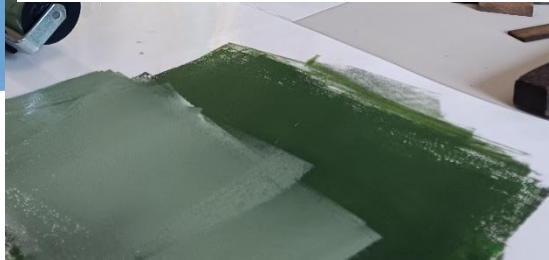
I started with blind embossing, printing without ink, in attempt to combine the essence of 'leave no trace' into Hanna's portrait.



I created the print for Hanna's portrait using an 1830's Columbian Printing Press.

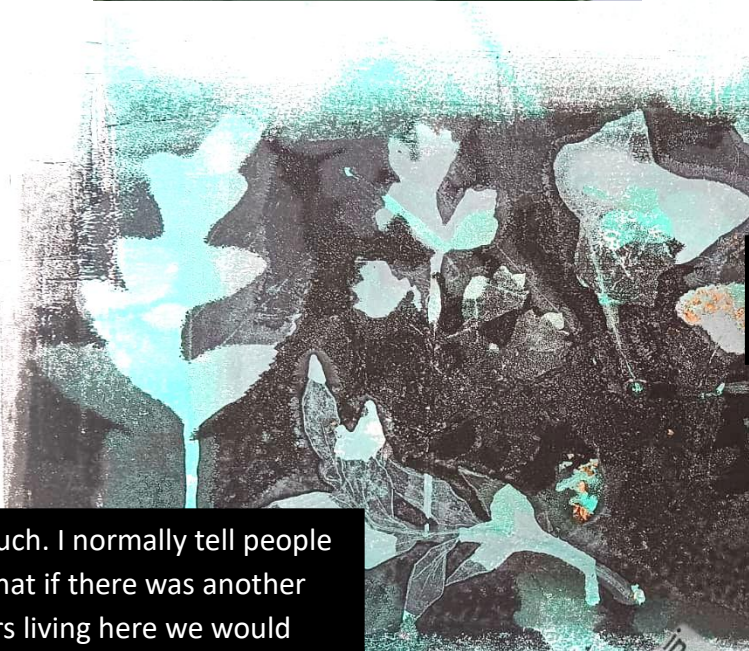


The print was too faint, so I experimented with coloured inks. I used the print negatives, with white space left where the plant should be.



I knew Hanna's portrait needed to draw from the landscape in which she creates. I went foraging and gathered plants for her portrait, and only took what I needed.

'only take what you need and leave some for others.'



'There is so much. I normally tell people in my village that if there was another 10 rope makers living here we would have enough material for all the 10 of us and there would still be enough'

that none of these qualities can be observed without slowing down and really listening, and also sitting a lot, just like we are doing right now. I very often go out and sit in places. To be present

throughout my life has contributed, it's taken 34 years to make it. Because if you remove anything I wouldn't be able to make or do what I do right now and um.

in reciprocity to engage as if I was part of a bigger whole as if with the awareness and intention that my actions my steps anything im taking has an impact on other life around me other life forms.

There is so much.

I use also tenderness as quality as something that guides. In tenderness also the tending, the word, what does that mean to be tending to myself and to something else, to live with tenderness, and to work with tenderness.

to walk in a landscape with open eyes to observe the environment and to see what is there in abundance

I wanted to incorporate knots into Hanna's portrait somehow, I am not a fibre artist, so I used a material familiar to me – paper. I plaited the lines of text I had cut out of Hanna's transcript.



Manna's Portrait



tenderness

abundance

A portrait of my research

