

## Practitioner's Statement

### ***I am my Demon***

Euan Wynne-Jones

Corruption is intrinsic to the human condition; it is inside us all, and cannot be denied. I wanted to expressively create a disturbing aura of pain and distress through looking at myself as the subject, and alluding to the possible progression of corruption in my future years as a basis for my concept. The emotions expressed in my face aim to exemplify the uncertainty of life after school for millennials. With so many options, and paths to follow I am afraid to wonder, what if I go down the wrong one? In my painting *Everything that I thought could go wrong*, did I aimed to elicit qualities of moral corruption where there is inherently none, exemplified through *The world is at my feet*. In painting this diptych, I aimed to enable the viewer to project themselves onto the paintings, questioning their own inner demons just as I have.

I began my research looking for distortion of the face in relation to emotional connection with the subject. Instantly I was drawn to Francis Bacon's *Pope Innocent X* series, which uses strong, violent, disturbing imagery to create a striking first impression, with the gaunt screaming expression he imposes on Innocent's face leaving a permanent impression of how I perceived that a facial expression denotes pain and suffering. I felt as if I was being Bacon - representing the mind being torn apart in this series, and this idea has subconsciously influenced everything I've done since. Ironically, after further research, I discovered that Bacon did the opposite, as he has repeatedly said to have done this purely as a technical exercise to explore his style and colour palette!

After realising I wanted to create a deeper meaning in my works I began to question how I could visualise the manifestation of corruption into a physical form. This ultimately lead me to discover the quintessential example of this. Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Grey* wherein a man who lives a life of sin, debauchery, and immorality remains eternally handsome, and youthful, hiding his 'true corrupt self' behind locked doors manifesting in a painting he must constantly view to uphold the illusion he has created. In relation to my works, I feel as if every time I have returned to paint, the dichotomy between the 'physical' perception of myself, and the 'True' inner self has widened.

To create this distinct difference between the two paintings in the diptych, I had to render an idealised version of myself in *The world is at my feet*, where I applied stylistically, the application of paint seen in the works of Robert Hannaford and Otto Dix. Hannaford's portraits are quintessentially about the materiality of the paint. Every mark is indicative of his intense desire to capture the soul and essence of the sitter. This was an apt aspiration for me to strive towards. Dix, on the other hand, utilises a rawness that eats away at the soul of the sitter. He never wanted to flatter his sitter; their most unrefined feature was left as imperfect. In *Everything that I thought could go wrong*, did I had to continually critique my every feature, exposing all flaws, and imperfections, changing and morphing these to elicit demonic like qualities that represented what I could symbolically become. My greatest fear in life is not reaching my full potential, falling short, and never recovering from corrupting influences. This diptych presents my internal battle with these fears. Having to constantly confront this reflection of how I see myself, has allowed me, in some respects, to get past that fear and push myself beyond what I thought I was capable of becoming.

It is easy to perceive the corruption and inherent evil in someone like Ted Bundy or Harold Shipman who ruthlessly murdered without empathy, devoid of all remorse. However, it is much harder to see this in ourselves and this diptych is a realisation of that in relation to myself. Like the Picture of Dorian Gray, this painting offers a glimpse of what I could become, if I care little for the potential of what is good in the world around me.

The established compositional hanging for the two paintings is an important aspect of the concept. It is in this positioning of the portraits that the eyes meet. It offers a salutary note – my idealised self recognises the potential for corruption, and the manifestation of this in the form of this demonised portrait.

The triptych I am Dorian Gray connects my corrupt self inextricably to Dorian Gray. I began this series with a process of layering pencil drawings over each other, where successive layers became more distorted and expressive, slowly removing parts of the face as each layer progressed. This erasure of identity and recognition helped reinforce my conceptual premise for the body of work. In many ways, the individual portraits that make up this triptych are a form of progressive deterioration between The world is at my feet and Everything that I thought could go wrong, did. The decision to digitally print them in black allowed the shadows of doubt and regret to become the focus of the portraits. Their immediate and loose rendering hints at the degradation of self. The writer/artist Mervyn Peake's illustrative style proved helpful in the development of my drawings. I love to draw, so it was a pleasure to research his methodology. It was Peake's illustrations for the self-penned *Gormenghast* trilogy of books that established my connection to his stylistic oeuvre.

I understand the fundamental connection between drawing and painting. I love both, and cannot envision the expression of self without one and the other. This is made obvious throughout my folio, and assisted the informed way that I went about constructing my Practical. The process of doing a painting was really something that brought problem-solving strategies to the fore. It allowed me to learn how to look at a painting, and instantly recognise what is wrong with it. The more I paint, the more I start to see. I revelled in the process of examining the face as a series of planes, and how I could paint, then destroy, these planes through the progress of the diptych. In the end, it is in the saying "*the eyes are the widows into the soul*" that I find the essence of my conceptual premise for my body of work. It may be a cliché, but it informs the synergy of this body of work.