1.

**David Fairbairn**

For IMPRINT Magazine Online Q & A

December 2021

**Q: What were some of the foundation ideas for this Exhibition project?**

**Drawn together** was originally conceived as an exhibition focussing on the double portrait. This was a significant departure from my previous work that had focused on the singular iconic head.

Unlike the encounterbetween one sitter & myself, which is particularly intense with the single portrait, exploring the relationship between two sitters who are friends & who are often engaged in a conversation with one another leaving me to be mostly the observer is quite a different dynamic. The outcomes are invariably more challenging, complex & interesting. **(Double Portraits\_Quartet\_V.H. & J.E.L. No’s 1-4\_2018).**

However with the advent of Covid 19 I was unable to work with my regular sitters. Fortunately for me my partner the artist Suzanne Archer offered to sit for me on a regular basis which resulted in a new & extensive body of work. Initially I worked on individual portraits of Suzanne **(Intimacy\_S.A.No’s 1-12\_ 2020)** which led to a new series of double portraits in which I included myself. It was an interesting challenge in that I had to construct the drawing of myself at a separate time mostly with the use of mirrors & photo documentation to locate the relationship between us.

One of the advantages of working with someone you are living with is that you can ask them to assume more personal poses, which often came about from mutual discussion and often much hilarity!

The resulting series ***Double Lives \_D.F & S.A .\_2021*** reflects a long & sustained personal & artistic relationship extending back more than three decades. It is this body of work that has become the main focus of this exhibition.

**Q: How did the artwork selection take place?**

The exhibition process evolved over a number of years from initial proposals to both Grafton & Hawkesbury Regional Galleries. This resulted in both Galleries agreeing to present the exhibition in 2021 & 2022 respectively.

As Grafton Gallery is the first venue, I worked closely with their Exhibitions & Collections Officer in deciding how the show should be curated. As many of the works are displayed as sets it was decided to reduce the overall number of works in the exhibition so as to provide plenty of breathing space.

 The selection process was also dependent on representing the three distinct bodies of work: **Couples -** **V.H & J.E.L., 2017-2020**, **Large Scale Single Figures –T.J.K., 2019-2020** & **Intimacy & Double Lives** **- D.F & S.A., 2020-21**

**2.**

 **Q: How does the Exhibition manifest –what do visitors experience?**

This Exhibition is very much about the process & nature of drawing itself. As the work relies essentially on a linear construction this reinforces the underlying abstraction in the mark making. An analogy would be to consider a building without cladding, an open ended skeletal structure. In this way the portraits have had their skin stripped back so you can metaphorically enter into the head.

I believe these works come across as intensive & obsessive observations of ordinary men & women in their later years. The resonance of these subjects emerges through an emotional charge of distorted & exaggerated lines, the process of deconstruction & reconfiguration distilling the particular stance or characteristic gesture of the sitters.

In this respect while these portraits could be seen as a series of performative marks or gestures made in an instant of time the intention is much more to do with measured time. A meditation & engagement with the subjects over many weeks, months & even years.

The drawings & paintings then, have undergone the same checks, adjustments & redirections as the lives of the sitters.

**Q: What are some of the key works and what subject matter do they deal with?**

The first set of Key works in this exhibition **V.H & J.E.L.\_Quartet\_No’s 1-4\_2018** focus on two old friends who are a much loved couple at their local Gallery, Campbelltown Art Centre. I have attempted to examine the relationship and connections between these two women and my own interaction with them. Painting and drawing two women now in their eighty’s I can also see a reflection of my own ageing process.

The second set of significant works are the large scale single figure studies particularly **T.J.K.No 3\_** **2019. I** was totally fascinated by the sheer size of this man, so I wanted to work with the whole body & express a sense of his overwhelming presence .T.J.K. for many years owned & operated my local mower shop. The ‘small motor mechanic”. He was a man who had experienced many of life’s less palatable aspects & yet came across as a gentle & astute commentator of the human condition.

The final set of important works are the single figure drawings of my partner the artist Suzanne Archer **Intimacy\_ S. A. No’s 1-12 \_2020** & the Double Portraits of myself & Suzanne **Double Lives\_ D.F & S.A No’s 1-16\_2021.** Also the painting **Double Lives\_D.F & S.A No 4\_ 2021.**These are theseminal works in this exhibition & are some of my first artworks to have expressed a more intimate expression of a relationship.

**3.**

**Q: What is it about the printmaking experience that you most appreciate?**

As my work is predominately about drawing I see this being totally compatible with the printmaking medium. I work directly onto the copper plate from the subject & enjoy the delayed reaction between making the drawing & the final often unexpected outcomes. What I most appreciate is the transformative qualities of the etched copper line that is a result of the plate being immersed in the ferric chloride solution. The quality of the corrosive line is quite different to a drawn line on paper using charcoal or pastel. The mirror image is also a challenge, which allows me to be less constrained by the original drawing as I am continually seeking a more experimental and personal approach, rather than being constrained by traditional printmaking methods.

There is a suite of twelve copper etchings in this show. **Heartfelt S. A. No’s 1-12 \_2020**

EXHIBITION DETAILS:

**Grafton Regional Gallery**: **11th December 2021 -6th February 2022**

(02)6642 3177

[www.graftongallery.nsw.gov.au](http://www.graftongallery.nsw.gov.au)

EXHIBITION DETAILS:

**Hawkesbury Regional Gallery: 5th August\_ 16th October 2022**

(02)4560 4441

[www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/gallery](http://www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/gallery)

 **David Fairbairn November 27th 2021**