

**PORTRAIT PAINTING OF AN ELDERLY'S GRIEF: A
FORMALISTIC APPROACH**

NGU MEI CUI

UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

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**PORTRAIT PAINTING OF AN ELDERLY'S GRIEF: A
FORMALISTIC APPROACH**

by

NGU MEI CUI

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Appendix A Research Proposal Evaluation Form

Appendix B Research Finding Presentation Report

CATAN POTRET DUKA SEORANG WARGA TUA: SATU PENDEKATAN FORMALISTIK

ABSTRAK

Penyelidikan ini menekankan pengalaman artis memahami emosi dengan mengusahakan lukisan potret duka neneknya, seorang wanita yang berusia 100 tahun sebagai medium karya seni dalam suasana ruang studio. Tema-tema seperti idea "menghormati" dalam melukis orang yang paling intim, kesedihan sebagai daya penggerak amalan seni kreatif, "diri" seorang pelukis dalam potret, potret orang tua, idea dan teori formalisme, dan formalisme dan pengalaman telah dimasukkan dalam tinjauan literatur penyelidikan ini. Objektif penyelidikan ini adalah untuk meneroka dan menerapkan pelbagai elemen dan prinsip formalistik sebagai kaedah ekspresi emosi artis. Ekspresi emosi semasa proses penghasilan karya seni serta hasil produk seni kemudiannya dianggap sebagai kaedah yang dikenali sebagai refleksi sendiri atau inkuiri sendiri untuk memahami pengalaman emosi artis dan mengenalpasti emosi dalaman artis yang memberi kesan kepada pembuatan seninya. Teknik lain yang diaplikasikan merangkumi lakaran eksperimen fotografi sebagai kaedah pengumpulan data, pelbagai kemahiran lukisan minyak termasuk *alla prima*, *glazing*, analisis planar, dan *scumbling*, serta pencahayaan *chiaroscuro* sebagai aplikasi penceritaan dalam lukisan. Kajian menggunakan model analisis yang diadaptasi daripada teori emosi dan lukisan oleh Hjort dan Lver. Ia berfungsi untuk mengkategorikan karya seni mengikut tiga tema berbeza dengan kata kunci masing-masing iaitu katartik, matlamat, dan kaitan sebagai bahagian depan untuk penemuan di bab terakhir. Dalam bab

Penyiasatan Studio, proses penghasilan karya seni bagi setiap fasa dihuraikan dan dianalisis berkaitan elemen dan prinsip formalistik seperti pencahayaan, warna, kontras, gubahan serta pandangan dan postur subjek yang di mana kesemua elemen dan prinsip formalistik ini bekerjasama untuk mencapai gambaran duka warga tua dan luahan emosi artis. Emosi yang diluahkan kemudiannya dicerminkan dan dikategorikan di bab terakhir melalui model analisis yang dibentuk sebelum ini . Daripada pengkategorian, ekspresi emosi katarsis diperiksa untuk dikaitkan dengan rasa deria yang bergema yang dikenalpasti sebagai penggerak yang memulakan seluruh proses kemunculan atau pembuatan seni. Pada akhir penyelidikan, didapati bahawa penerokaan diri artis dan pemahaman emosinya adalah kemuncak dalam keseluruhan perjalanan penyelidikan.

PORTRAIT PAINTING OF AN ELDERLY'S GRIEF: A FORMALISTIC

APPROACH

ABSTRACT

This research highlights the experience of the artist comprehending emotions by working on portrait paintings of grief for her grandmother, a centenarian, as a medium of the work of art in a studio space setting. Themes such as the idea of "respect" in painting the most intimate person, grief as a driving force of creative art practice, the "self" of a portraitist, portraiture of elderly, the idea and theory of formalism, and formalism and experience are included in the literature review of this research. The objective of this research is to explore and apply various formalistic elements and principles as methods of the artist's emotional expression. The emotional expression during the artmaking process and the artworks produced are later contemplated as a method known as self-reflection or self-inquiry to reason the artist's emotional experience and recognise her embodied emotions impact her artmaking. Other techniques are applied, such as photography experimental sketches as a data collection method, various oil painting skills of alla prima, glazing, planar analysis, and scumbling, and chiaroscuro lighting as a narration application in painting. There is also an analysis model adapted from Hjort and Lver's theory of emotion and the paintings. It categorises artworks according to three different themes with respective keywords of cathartic, aim, and connect as the first part of the last chapter of findings. In the chapter on Studio Investigation, the process of each of the three phases of artwork produced is elaborated and analysed concerning the formalistic elements and principles such as lighting, colour, contrast, composition, as well as the gaze and

posture of the subject matter which all these work together to achieve a representation of the elderly's grief and the artist's expression of emotions. The emotions expressed are later reflected and categorised in the last chapter of findings through the analysis model formed earlier. From the categorisation, the emotional expression of catharsis is inspected to relate to the resonant felt of sense, which is identified as the prompt that initiates the whole artmaking or emergence process. At the end of the research, it is found that the artist's self-exploration and comprehension of her emotions are the highlights of the whole research journey.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

To discuss emotion and portrait painting in studio practice, the emotions of the painter are portrayed through studio processes, and the emotions of the subject matter are to be expressed or depicted by the painter in a portrait painting process. This research aims to discuss those emotions and their relationship through artistic investigation.

The formalistic aspect is a tool for expressing emotions in portraiture. For example, lines are the keynotes of Käthe Kollwitz's strong emotional expression (Zigrosser, 1969), whether in her etching works or drawings. The thick lines drawn in her self-portrait series and other figurative drawings about death, woman, and child, as described by Gerhart Hauptmann, can penetrate the marrow like a cry of pain that was never heard among the Greeks and Romans. Van Thulden (1606-1669) uses contour lines to differentiate male and female skin and the texture of an object. For instance, a thinner orange-red line paints the Dutch maiden's hands, and a brown contour line paints the male, while for weapons that have a hard metal surface, the lines are dark grey and sharp. In terms of brush strokes, Lee et al. (2020) compare paintings by Claude Monet (1840-1926) and Edvard Munch (1863-1944). Monet portrays a lively and youthful emotion in *Woman with a Parasol* (1875) with vibrant and bright colour brush strokes, and the direction of those brush strokes can be seen, too. Edvard Munch depicts calm and depressing emotions in *Summer Night, Inger on the Beach* (1886), with dark colours and static brush strokes.

Artists who paint the elderly as their subject have their own opinions regarding ageing. Their opinion does influence them, including their emotions while painting the

subject. Robert Henri (1865-1929), an American painter known for choosing subjects because of their personality or physical appearance instead of their social achievement (Gerety & Kelne, 2003), responded to the artistic fascination of an old face. He expresses his view that "if age means to them an expansion and development of character, this new mental and physical state will have its effect on the physical. A face that was only pretty or dull in the early days will be transformed. The eyes will attain mysterious depths, there will be a gesture in the whole face of greater sensibility, and all will appear to co-ordinate" (Thompson, 2017). Rembrandt's elderly portrait of *An Old Man in Red* (1654) reflects positive life reviews through the confidence and resolution expressed in the faces. His *Portrait of an Old Woman* (1654) projects an unhappy life and negative emotions. Her face is lit, perhaps to bring attention to her facial expression, which is weary and depressed and at the same time, she is in deep thought (Kauppinen & McKee, 1988).

Nevertheless, the work of art can be very much related to and affected by the personal experience of the artist. As Dewey (2008) stated, "the actual work of art is what the does with and in experience."

1.1 Research Background

1.1.1 Historical Background of Portraiture

Below is the historical background of portraiture to introduce the functions of portraiture in different eras of time and their transitions over time.

A portrait serves as a self-representation of the sitter, so it tells stories of the sitter. In the sixteenth century, in Western art, portraits with life-sized and full-length

standing figures (Figure 1.1) were specially painted for those royals, rulers, and nobility as an association of status, power, authority, and wealth. In addition, their portraits are associated with different formats, attributes, and pictorial languages. Subordinate figures like servants, dogs, attendants, etc. may introduced to give prominence to the sitter's elevated status and authority. It represents the substitute of the sitter and is suitable for propaganda purposes such as dissemination of the image of the sovereign power, arranging dynastic marital alliances, etc., for the distribution of power, wealth, and privilege (Woodall, 1997).



Figure 1.1 Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, *Queen Elizabeth I* ('The Ditchley portrait'), 241.3 x 152.4 cm, Oil on Canvas, 1592

A transition occurred in the seventeenth century when the Protestants objected to religious imagery. There are married couples, family groups, and civic bodies depicted. An artist named Frans Hals depicts the Haarlem citizens (Figure 1.2) rather than the elites and nobility. His depiction shows the tendency to emphasise the hands and head of the non-aristocratic body, the origin and execution of thought, spirit, and

personality, rather than body regions associated with physical prowess and generation of a lineage like the trunk and genital area. The portraiture is also reduced in scale and has more modest interiors compared to the life-sized and full-length standing figure in the sixteenth century.



Figure 1.2 Frans Hals, *The Lute Player*, 70 x 62 cm, Oil on Canvas, 1623-1624

In the eighteenth century, a wide range of paintings, including domestic conversational pieces, were produced. When masquerade gains unprecedented importance, conventional sitters will adopt roles in their portrait depiction. Some artists are also interested in depicting actors. Furthermore, portraiture begins to play an important role in cultivating civility in commercial society. By the similar formats and group display of portraits, figures are depicted as united and defined by their civility, such as members of the Kit-Kat club in London.

In the nineteenth century, issues of realism and truth became the main criteria in portraiture. Men are portrayed with their social-political positions together with the criteria of essential inner quality to justify their privileged place (Woodall,1997). In

the 1839s, when the daguerreotype was invented, the demand for painted portraits declined (Gerety & Kelne, 2003). Photography is cheaper, faster, and more convenient in creating a likeness of an individual. The painters, therefore, began to explore new methods of representing people. Modern artists have started exploring new genres combining human and aesthetic elements.

In the twentieth century, American social realism depicted social issues and hardships faced by workers at that time (Anapur, 2016). However, earlier in that century, commissioned portraiture was considered detrimental to creativity (Woodall, 1997). After World War II, artists in the New York area started a new style in preference for abstract form and formal exploration, and it led to the formation of the philosophical void between the avant-garde and the genre of portraiture on the depiction of a person (Gerety & Kelne, 2003). However, Pop Arts in the 1960s were not completely abstract. Other art movements, such as hyperrealism, minimalism, and conceptual art, came within the same period in the 1960s. Chuck Close, a contemporary artist, besides working on hyperrealism portrait pieces along with other hyperrealists such as Richard Estes, Audrey Flack, and Ralph Goings, also produces his way of combining abstract and representational imagery.

As reviewed in the previous two paragraphs, the modernism of portraiture took place in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when the conventional representational tradition was no longer dominant. It is mainly because of the invention of photography as mentioned and the rejection of mimesis and for some in preference for the creative freedom assigned to the avant-garde (West, 2004). The portraitists were inspired to use new ways to represent the people in their world as they started to see the roles of individuals in society from different perspectives. For example, rather than proper

posture and having the best side of appearance such as beauty, youth, and power presented, Lucian Freud displayed whole-length naked figures and stressed the exaggerated ugliness and body imperfections of the sitters like swollen genitals, sagging fats, wrinkles of age in his works (Figure 1.3). This exaggerated manner was uncommon in the past. Nevertheless, Freud's skills and works of details of facial characteristics create a strong sense of character in his nudes and lightly distinguish one likeness from another (West, 2004).



Figure 1.3 Lucian Freud, *Benefits Supervisor Sleeping*, 151.3 x 219 cm, Oil on Canvas, 1995

Chuck Close was another modern portraitist who produced hyperrealistic large-scale portraits. None of his sitters were famous or known. A significant amount of effort was put into making the surface details of his massive-sized paintings successful to show the images as distancing and even abstract despite their lifelike qualities. The details include the magnifying facial imperfections such as blotches, blemishes, and wrinkles (Figure 1.4). However, the massive size of Close's works leads the viewer to concentrate more on the formal qualities of the sizable paintings.



Figure 1.4 Chuck Close, *Fanny/Fingerpainting*, 259.1 x 213.4 cm, Oil on Canvas, 1985

To this day, realistic portraiture is still one of the styles of painting that has been explored and experimented with. Its long history and contribution to art is unquestionable. Thomson (1880) sees realism as what he quoted Sir Joshua - "the value and rank of every art are in proportion to the mental labour employed on it, or the mental pleasure produced by it."

The artworks of this research are mainly in a realistic style. In producing realistic portraits, the artist found that taking time to work through the details helps in the artist's reflective activity.

1.1.2 Background Research of the Elderly

The subject in this research is a very old woman who knows very well the feeling of losing her beloved sons, similar to the mothers depicted in Kollwitz's artworks. This elderly woman did not lose her sons due to war or live in a chaotic era during those encounters, but receiving the sudden deaths of her three sons stroke her

emotion to the extent that only those who have similar experiences will understand. She has lived a century, and those feelings and grief never cease, and she still struggles today.

This research focuses on portraying the life of the elderly after the impact of severe negative events happened in the past. It shows more of the emotions that remain to this day, although they are not expressed as they were in the beginning. Therefore, a series of portraits has been created in this research to reveal the epitome of the artist's grandmother's character. The elderly's character is generally manifested in her life and reflected in the epitome of her being, which is inferred from her daily activity, status, behaviour, and emotions the painter observes (Berger, 2000). The image of the sitter is positive in the family. Being a matriarch of a four-generation family, she is treated as a symbol of experience and wisdom. However, she is also a centenarian who embodies the emotion of grief due to the loss of her sons. The time may have adjusted her emotions to be not too expressive, and maybe the elderly herself has found her way of expressing those unceasing feelings so that she can continue commemorating the deceased. However, always grieving and remembering perhaps becomes her way of reparation, as Käthe Kollwitz did.

As Freeland (2010) mentioned, many feelings come into play when painting parents, such as love and respect or even resentment or ambivalence. The image the parents present to their children can also be one of the factors. Freeland (2010) further explained that to paint a person closest or most intimate with the artists, and there would be an extent of subjectivity involved according to their knowledge and strong feelings for that person.

Therefore, being an interpreter of this family member who is highly respected in the family, the artist paints the emotion of grief this person embodied but with a certain extent of effect or subjectivity of the artist's personal world of experience and perceptions. These two results in the painter's interpretation of the soul.

1.1.3 Mental Issues in Late-life

The subject matter of this research seems to have depression symptoms, according to the observation of the artist, such as often crying during the artist's visits or when she is alone. In addition, she also faces the challenges of her declining body strength and mobility, which will subsequently affect her mental health.

This situation can be severe as Blazer (2003) states that depression is one of the causes of emotional suffering in later life and subsequently decreases the life quality of the elderly. Depression can be associated with several negative life events (Kraaij et al., 2002). For this research, it is the loss of loved ones experienced by the elderly. The psychodynamic theory suggests that a "depletion syndrome" may occur when one fails to search for restitution secondary to the inevitable losses in later life. Moreover, for the elderly who live long enough or the centenarian in the case of this research, the body change and disease will also cause both internal and external depletion. According to Blazer (2003), the elderly who are less socially engaged are more depressed. However, he also states that "religious coping" is found to be able to decrease feelings of worthlessness, loss of hope, withdrawal from social interactions, and other symptoms of depression.

1.2 Research Objectives

Below are the research objectives:

1. To define formalistic elements and principles in a series of portrait paintings as a method of portraying the elderly's personal experience of grief.
2. To analyse the formalistic elements and principles that work to form grief-themed portrait paintings.
3. To synthesise the creative practice reflection and its connection in terms of emotions of grief between the subject matter, the portrait paintings, and the artist.

1.3 Research Question

Below are the research questions:

- 1 What are the formalistic elements and principles that can be applied in portrait painting to portray the elderly emotion of grief?
- 2 How do the formalistic elements and principles work to form grief-themed portrait paintings?
- 3 What creative practice reflection can be formed, and what is its connection in terms of emotions of grief between the subject matter, the portrait painting, and the artist?

1.4 Problem Statement

The elderly, who is a centenarian, has been grieving the loss of her beloved sons. Although the negative events have passed for several years, the elderly never

ceased her grieving behaviour. With the emotions of grief embodied by the centenarian, her emotions become a subject of study in the research. The artist attempts to reflect on and understand the feelings of the elderly by working through a series of portraits of the elderly, with grief as a recurring theme. The elderly's grief and the artmaking process are subjects that can be inspected further in the reflective practice to find out their relationship with the artist herself.

1.5 Significance of Study

The research explores the emotion of grief in late life, revealing the artist's interpretation of the subject matter through portrait paintings. In this case, it is the concept of the researcher as artist and the artist as researcher forming a context in which artist-researchers can articulate the meaning of their own experiences (Leavy, 2020).

The experience of the subject matter becomes an object of contemplation for the researcher in understanding the emotions of the elderly and the researcher. The relationship between people's emotions and art can be further explored and understood through creative research and reflective process.

This research significantly leads the artist to understand her position in expressing emotions through her paintings. Her past emotional experience is the initiation factor when it resonates with the subject matter's emotions. The co-relationship between the artist, the subject matter, and the painting is becoming clearer. The emotions of the subject matter depicted in the portrait paintings mirror the emotional experience of the artist.

1.6 Scope and Limitation of Study

To explain the scope of the study, the research is based on the observations of an elderly's status, behaviour, speech, emotion, and daily activity and further analyses the physical visual expressions such as facial expression and body language without exploring and discussing deep into psychological disciplinary. The analysis does not apply to all elderly life situations. It is just an elderly's personal life experience from the point of view of a granddaughter of hers.

Regarding the limitation of the study, the subject's body condition due to old age is taken into consideration during photo shooting for data collection. The experimental level is limited as the subject gets fatigued easily, so the artist has to take the situation as it is.

1.7 Definitions of Key Terms

Grief is the emotion that accompanies mourning, and we grieve on a recurring basis as we face the commonplace losses that line our lives. (Volkan & Zintl, 2018)

Portraiture is not just likenesses but works of art that engage with ideas of identity as they are perceived, represented, and understood in different times and places. (West, 2004)

Formalism is the basis of the language of art, which consists of the formal art elements of line, colour, form and shape, value, texture, space, and movement. They are

furthermore composed to form design principles such as unity, similarity, continuation, variety and harmony, emphasis, rhythm, and balance. (Thorson, 2020)

Catharsis is an "emotional discharge" that accompanies the experience of distressful emotions (Bielby, 1997)

1.8 Research Framework

A research framework (Figure 1.5) has been formed to show the flow of this research. The elderly's grief portrait painting is the central theme of this research framework. In the beginning, the elderly's emotion of grief attracts the artist's attention. The emotions sensed prompted the artist to feel the need to express themselves. The prompt will be explained as a resonant felt sense in Chapter 5, now labelled Resonant Felt Sense Theory, in the research framework.

To further explore the subject matter, observation is needed. Through observation, the artist is able to tap into the grief emotion the subject matter lives with and also the epitome of her character observed from her daily life as mentioned in the background research of the elderly. More of the observation statement can refer to Chapter 4. To be able to record the findings of observation, photography has been selected as the suitable tool to collect the data and pictures of instant moments for later use in producing artwork. Planning and arrangement are involved in preparing the set and being experimental in the lighting and composition of the picture.

Before producing the final paintings, sketches and studies are necessary to familiarise oneself with the subject matter. It is a method to study the subject matter's

outer appearance or facial expressions and the emotions embodied and expressed through them. This process can be experimental, too, in trying out the different compositions and experimenting with colours in the sketches. This step starts the studio practices. After getting familiar with and rehearsing through sketches, start creating final paintings phase by phase. The study process is repeated before Phase 2. Phase 3 is composed of small-scale sketches itself. In between the phases, the creative process is dynamic and exploratory.

After that, a formalism analysis was carried out while elaborating the artmaking process phase by phase in Chapter 4.

While emotions are expressed through studio practices, the artist is guided to reflect on the relations between the works created and emotions. Therefore, supported by the painting and emotions theory by Lver and Hjort (1997), the artist clarifies the different purposes of creating every piece of artwork. By expression theory, the artist clarifies that formalism is a means of guiding the viewers' (viewers here including the artist) emotional experience of the work of art. Resonant felt sense theory explains the prompt that brought about the beginning of this research, which very much relates to both the artist and the elderly's common experience of loss in life. A more comprehensive explanation and elaboration of the relationship between formalism and expression theory, emotional experience, and resonance theory, which results in an experience of comprehending emotions, will be provided in Chapter 5. A chart flow (Figure 5.3) will also be provided, along with the explanation.

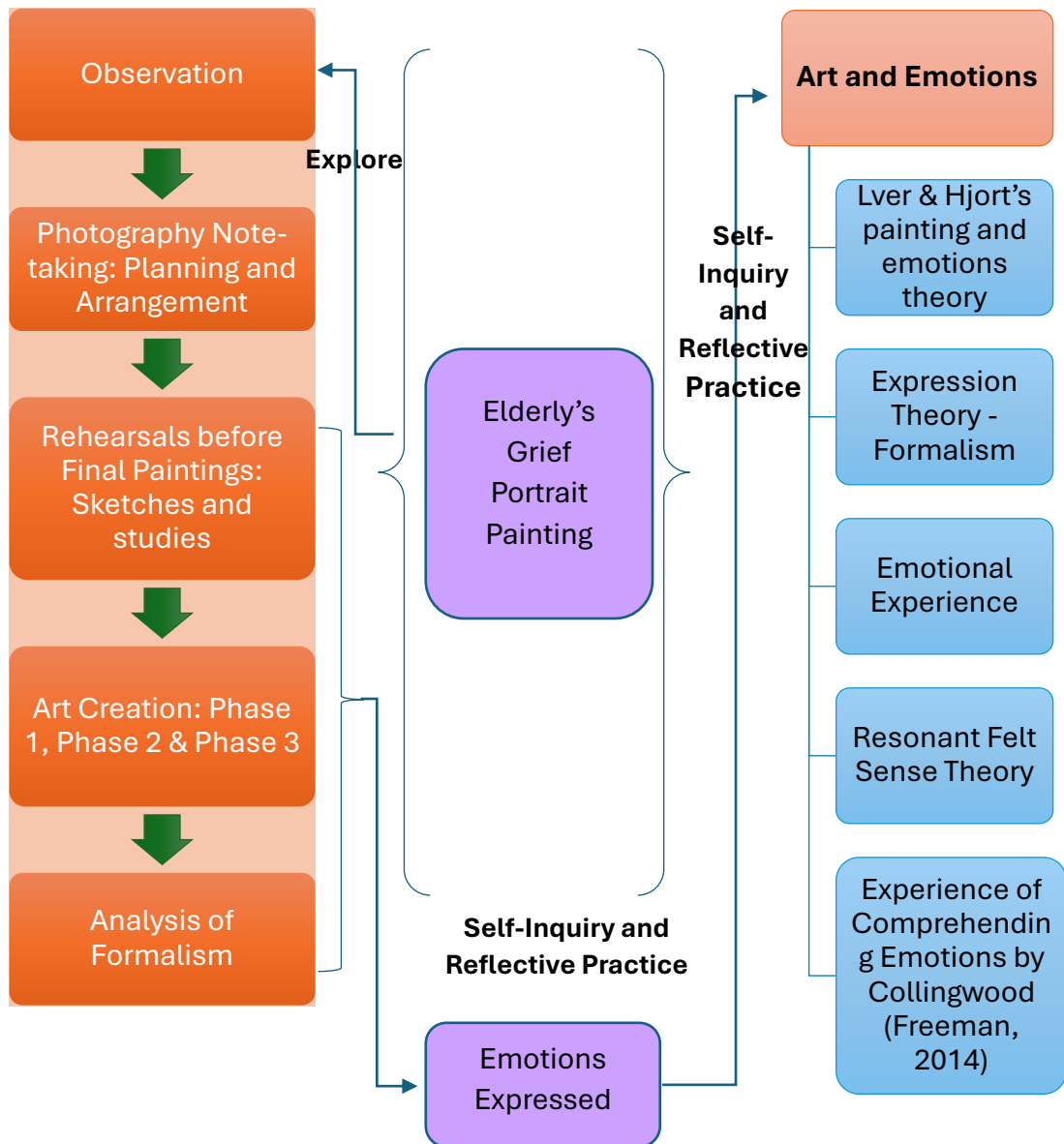


Figure 1.5 Research Framework

1.9 Summary

This chapter first briefly introduces how the formalistic aspect can play an important role in helping artists to express emotions in their works. The history of portraiture is introduced in the research background to give an idea of how the portrait's functions and purposes change from time to time. It later follows the research background of the subject matter of this research to introduce the subject matter's grief

and her identity. The research objectives and research questions are established, as well as the problem statement and the significance of the study. The scope of the study has been set, and its limitations have been identified. Listing out the definitions of the key terms brings to light the points that will be stressed in this research. The research framework introduces the whole flow of the research in general.

CHAPTER 2

ARTIST REVIEW AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter comprises two parts: the artist review and the literature review. The artist review consists of six artists that the researcher found their works inspire her in her thinking process and are relatable to her artmaking. The literature review is the theoretical context that this research is based on.

2.2 Artist Review

2.2.1 Käthe Kollwitz (1867-1945)

The first artist is Käthe Kollwitz (1867-1945). Her work expresses the intense grief of a mother who lost her son. It is not only an expression of what she saw from the encounter with other people who all live in a chaotic war era but also her own experience of losing her eighteen-year-old son who volunteered in the battle. The inner turmoil and uncertainty the mother experienced were expressed through her works. She questions the meaning of the sacrifice of numerous young people, including her son, in the war and struggles for many years after (Moorjani, 1986). She witnesses too many deaths and creates artworks related to themes such as death, woman, and child. According to Moorjani (1986), the artist was in frequent depressions and anxieties, and those surfaced in repeated waves; thus, she did reparative actions through works of art energized by her fear for her own child and herself.

Käthe Kollwitz shares a similar experience of grief with the subject matter. Kollwitz's works enable the artist of this research to compare Kollwitz's emotions with her subject matter's emotions and their respective expression of emotions. Kollwitz's work includes strong figures with intense emotions of hugging a dead child (Figure 2.1) and close-up self-portraits (Figures 2.2 and 2.3). The subject matter of this research's grieving behaviour tends to be quieter and gentler, such as sobbing and meditation, as shown in Figures 2.2 and 2.3.



Figure 2.1 Käthe Kollwitz, *Woman with Dead Child*, 41.2 x 41.7 cm, Line Etching, Drypoint, Sandpaper and Soft Ground with Imprint of Ribbed Laid Paper and Ziegler's Transfer Paper, 1903



Figure 2.2 Käthe Kollwitz, *Self-Portrait*, 41.2 x 41.7 cm, Crayon and Brush Lithograph (Transfer), 1934

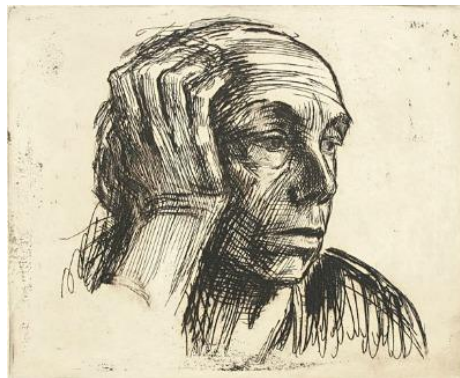


Figure 2.3 Käthe Kollwitz, *Self-Portrait*, 21.3 x 26.4 cm, Etching, 1921

2.2.2 William Yang (b.1943)

An Australian artist, William Yang, created works with a theme of loss and grief for his gay friend and his mother. He writes beside or on the photographs he had taken as a documentation diary. Later, he viscerally performed his artwork, *Sadness* (1992,) in a setting of projected images, spoken monologue, and live music that

emotionally engages the viewers effectively (Caluya, 2006). He applied the close-up tradition of portraiture with some subjects directly facing the camera and, therefore, direct contact with the audience. In Grehan's (2002) review of Yang's work, she commented that Yang is both the narrator and the work. The subject is Yang's life. In his presentation, although he experienced those losses, there is a juxtaposition where he did not display his emotions through unflinching narration and remained in his position of stillness so as not to disturb the potency of the picture.

The idea of close-up portraits of Yang's suffering friend (Figure 2.4) is similar to the artist's practices in Phase 2, *Lying in Bed Pose* and *Coloured Sitting Pose* (Page 87). The direct gaze of Yang's mother (Figure 2.5) is similar to the *Room Scene* painting in Phase 1 (Page 81).

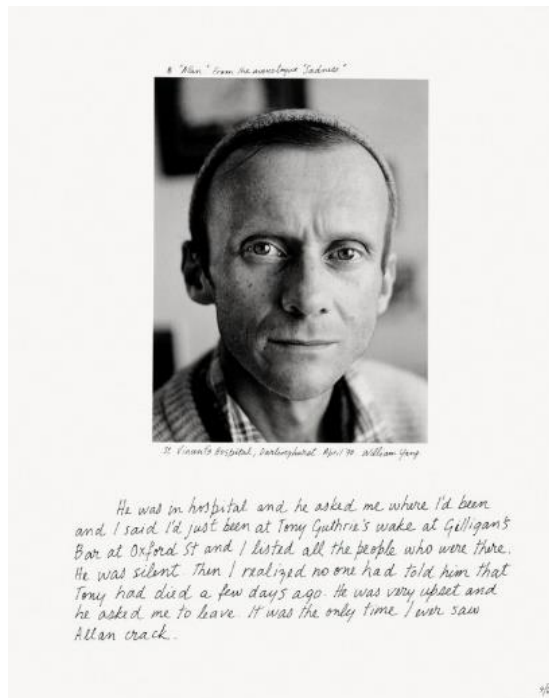


Figure 2.4 William Yang, *Allan from Monologue Sadness*, 50.7 x 40.4 cm (each sheet), Gelatin-silver photographs, 1990



Figure 2.5 William Yang, *Mother, Graceville*. 1989. (from 'About my mother' portfolio), 51.3 x 61.1 cm, Gelatin silver photograph ed. 2/10., 2003



Figure 2.6 William Yang, *"Mother with roses."* Brisbane '79. (from 'About my mother' portfolio), 51.3 x 61.1 cm, Gelatin silver photograph on paper, 2003

2.2.3 Rembrandt (1606-1669)

Rembrandt is a master at depicting chiaroscuro light and shadow. For instance, he used rippling light, shadow, and half-shadow patterns to portray a plain but wealthy woman as a dignified and noble subject (Figure 2.7). Besides, Rembrandt believed that

the identity of the subject can be captured *in medias res* or in the midst of things such as his work "Portrait of a Man at a Writing Desk" (Figure 2.8). The subject matter in the painting looked surprised, with a pen poised over his writing sheet on a book as if he was caught for the instant (Freeland, 2007).

Furthermore, in capturing his sitter's inner being and renderings, Rembrandt endorses women in their autonomy and portrays them as vibrant, active, unique, and irreplaceable in his paintings. He acknowledges their boundaries and presents them as non-ownable entities. He connects the women's reflective emotions in private moments with those of the characters in biblical stories they represent, such as Susanna's horror and Bathsheba's grief (Freeland, 2010).

The painting technique of chiaroscuro is found suitable for depicting nighttime and presenting its connotations in the artist's Phase 1 works, Night Scene I and II (Page 78). The idea of *in medias res* has also been applied in Phase 2's Lying in Bed Pose painting (Page 87). At the same time, the subject matter the artist presents in her works is a special person to the artist, and she is irreplaceable.



Figure 2.7 Rembrandt van Rijn, *Agatha Bas*, 105.4 x 83.9 cm, Oil on Canvas, 1641

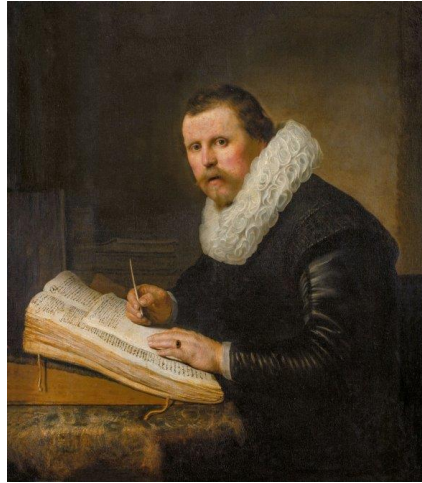


Figure 2.8 Rembrandt van Rijn, *Portrait of a Man at a Writing Desk*, 104.2 x 92 cm, Oil on Canvas, 1631

2.2.4 Pablo Picasso (1881-1973)

Blue Period (1901-1904) is instantly recognizable by its overwhelming use of blue colours and melancholic figures. Picasso started the nearly monochromatic works of the Blue Period after the death of his closest friend, Casagemas (Bleicher, 2012). He figured that working in blue was ideal for his subject matter, which is the underprivileged, crippled, and oppressed (Ravin & Perkins, 2004). Picasso created figures that are blind, and some critics have claimed that these figures display a "spiritual inner vision." The figures do not interact well and are solitary. Some observers say this reflects Picasso's personal isolation during that period (Ravin & Perkins, 2004).

The colour impression of Picasso and this research share a certain level of similarity, such as in the works of the Night Scenes series and Colored Sitting Pose. Blue is used as a connotation of sadness and loneliness in portraying the centenarian's frailty.