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Marking Time: a Figurative Humanist Approach to Drawing.

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A Figurative Humanist Approach to Drawing

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by

Donna M. Wilt

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ABSTRACT

Marking Time:

A Figurative Humanist Approach To Drawing

by

Donna M. Wilt

This document is a supportive paper for the M.F.A. Graduate Exhibition "Marking Time" held at the B. Carroll Reece Museum, East Tennessee State University, in fulfillment of the Master of Fine Arts degree. Within this paper, I discuss the subjective nature of my drawings and claim my role as a figurative humanist. Through drawing, I explore the emotive qualities of my own form. Rather than depicting actual spaces, I place myself in psychological spaces that reflect specific moods. Chiaroscuro creates an altered reality where visual tension is implicated through the physicality of my movements.

This paper also briefly discusses the history of figurative expression, the figurative artists whose works embody this concept, and their influence on my work. An explanation of the individual drawings in the public exhibition is included in the paper. This document concludes with a personal reflection on my growth as an artist.

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Lastly, I want to thank Perry Johnson. By continuously pushing me to explore new techniques and concepts, he has taught me that all things are possible. He has been a constant source of inspiration as well as support.

Many thanks to all of you.

 This work is dedicated to the memory of my father, Norman Arlie "Rusty" Wilt, 1949 – 2002.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to explore the expressive nature of figure drawing. In terms of "expression," I concentrate on concepts reinforced by figurative humanists. According to Clint Brown and Cheryl McLean, authors of <u>Drawing from Life</u>, "a humanist, by definition, is concerned with human nature and human affairs. Artists who use the human figure as a vehicle through which their work can express human emotions or some measure of the human condition could be defined as humanists" (Brown and McLean 241).

Generally speaking, I explore the figure through the immediate process of drawing. As stated in <u>Drawing from Life</u>, "Drawing is a highly complex form of activity that engages the whole body physically, psychologically, and intellectually. When drawing another human being, we symbolically reach out and bring that person near, and, in the process, we instill a part of ourselves in the image we create. The drawing itself is never just a reflection of the subject: it is biographical and, therefore, for the artist, it is autobiographical" (Brown and McLean 3). Using many varied drawing tools, such as charcoal, graphite, and ink, I aggressively manipulate the materials to create varied textures in my drawings. These marks pay tribute to the surface quality of the drawings. Also, the scale of my work is large, often larger than life. Stylistically, I focus on line and value within a black and white format. Working from direct observation and photographs, I reinterpret myself through various staged poses, heightening the psychological nature of the work. Dramatic lighting adds to the unusual narrative portrayed in each drawing.

In Chapter 2, I discuss the history of figurative humanism and how figurative expression has developed over time, from its earliest function as a means of recording history to a new outlet of expression among modern artists. Chapter 3 discusses my classical influences. Within this chapter, I discuss how these artists greatly influence my work. In Chapter 4, I discuss contemporary artists and show how their respective works embody the concept of figurative humanism. The function of photography in my personal working method is documented in Chapter 5, along with information regarding my mark-making techniques. Also included in this chapter is the meaning behind the seven individual works in the public exhibition. In conclusion, Chapter 6 discusses the healing power of art and how my current and future work can incorporate this attribute.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORY OF FIGURATIVE HUMANISM

The following chapter reviews the history of figurative humanism, where it originated, and how it has progressed throughout time. Important classical references, as well as contemporary influences, are included to show how figurative drawing has been used as a means of contemporary expression. A difficult subject matter to capture is the expressive quality of the human figure, especially the face. In fact, no other living creature has such a capacity for expressing such varied emotions. Throughout history, artists have continually produced portraits - but why? How has the portrait, as a means of expressing human emotion, progressed through the years? Why does it remain an important part of our society today? In this chapter, all of these questions are explored. Also included is a discussion about the expressive artists whose influences have lasted through the years.

Throughout time, man has strived to capture his own image. According to author Stephen Longstreet, "The making of portraits is very old, as old as the discovery of fire most likely. It goes back to cave paintings left us by ancient man, where we find portraits of witch doctors, hunters; their expressions forming an emotional design, man's first image of himself" (1). More than likely, these images were abstracted. Nevertheless, they signify the importance of man's need to record his presence and the world around him.

Human images have served many functions over time. Specifically, they have served as a means of permanence or a lasting record of a definite moment in time for certain individuals. Whether sculptural or painted, they can be found in many ancient civilizations such as Chaldean, Assyrian, Egyptian, Chinese, Japanese, Persian, Indian, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, to name a few. Also, the figure is presented in the postclassical world on both sides of the Atlantic stretching from the Middle Ages to the present.

For the most part, Egyptian representations (or icons) served a religious purpose. As stated in the book, Portraits: 5,000 Years:

> During the period of the Old Kingdom (3100 - 2181 B.C.), and even before, portrait statues of kings were carved specifically for the 'serdab,' a small chamber in royal funerary complexes, and also for the courts of the great funerary temples of the Fourth and Fifth Dynasties. These effigies not only were a dwelling place for the 'ka' and a reassurance of the pharaoh's immortality, should the attempt made to preserve his body fail, but they had a further function: to

receive in perpetuity the offerings made for his 'ka' by priests of his funerary cult (Walker 15).

Although these statures were idealized, they had to be individualized in order to assure recognition by the 'ka'. Unimportant details, such as posture, hands, feet, and legs, might follow a canon, but the face had to have the features of the departed. Consequently, a series of relatively accurate portrayals of Egyptians was executed over a period of 2,600 years.

The Greeks idealized their departed into beautiful yet standard stereotypes. Unlike the Romans, who preserved the likenesses of their ancestors, the Greeks chose the heroic ideal. As quoted by Pliny, "In this art, noble men were made to appear still nobler" (Walker 35). *Pericles,* a Greek statesman who died in 429 B.C., is forever immortalized as a young hero; his features tell nothing of his age or character. However, a trend toward individualization occurred around 350 B.C. when the tomb of Mausolos was built. This particular statue shows a melancholy individual complete with pensive, deep-set eyes, long hair, and a down-curving mustache, showing not only his physical characteristics but also his emotional ones.

In 50 B.C., Roman busts consisted of two opposing styles - Italic realism and Hellenism. Typically realistic, a Roman bust would show specific features inherent to an individual. On the other hand, a Hellenistic portrait would "ideally" enhance a person's features. An excellent example of late Roman portraiture that combines these two styles is the bust *Commodus as Hercules.* Represented as Hercules, a lion skin covers his head. Technically as well as psychologically, the bust is exceptional. Commodus is shown as a beautiful animal. His strong and superbly rendered muscles ripple under a thin covering of skin, calling to mind that he often fought as a gladiator. His hair is chiseled and drilled so that there is an alteration of highlights and deep shadows, which contrast with the ivory smoothness of the flesh. His eyes are spellbinding in their suggestiveness. To the iris are added two dots, indicating the points of reflected light. Thus the direction of the glance is shown by the position of the pupil, and this gives the countenance a new animation (Walker 59).

At the beginning of the 3rd century, Roman figures changed in form from realistic to the expressive. The influence of soldier-emperors whose main concern was to be portrayed as strong, competent rulers with rough features and furrowed countenances initiated the change. By the end of the 3rd century, however, even more expressive figures were being made with no

reference to classical beauty. Instead, distorted, disenchanted images were created. Such renderings included huge eyes, gaunt faces, and bitter expressions.

A sense of expressionism continued to flourish in the Renaissance. A resurgence of the individual took place. The uncommon person was now elevated to higher standards. Due to this increased interest, more emphasis was placed upon the human face and all that it expressed. Choosing to represent the human figure more naturalistically, Italian artists, such as Andrea del Castagno, created exquisite portraits. His style, however, would soon be overshadowed by another significant style by a Florentine artist, Leonardo da Vinci. Instead of showing the subject in a hard, clear light, with forms modeled in separate planes like Castagno, Leonardo chose to illuminate his subjects, therefore creating an indistinct gradation of modeling. According to author John Walker:

> The difference between the sculptural mode of Castagno and the pictorial mode of Leonardo marks the boundary between the Early and the High Renaissance. This is one of the most significant stylistic changes in the history of painting. It is a basic transformation from a linear or relief-like style to a more painterly depiction, with light and shade merging imperceptibly and the contours softened to unify the figure and its ambient atmosphere (86).

Another innovative concept Leonardo introduced was psychological portraiture. In his own words, he stated that many of his paintings were about "the motions of the mind" (Walker 86). This effect is evident in his most famous painting *Mona Lisa*. Her quiet amusement puzzles viewers to this day. Leonardo's influential style affected other artists, such as Raphael, who produced significant psychological characterizations in the early 1600s.

Domenikos Theotokopoulos, otherwise known as El Greco, relied heavily on distortions. Being influenced by Parmigianino, the 16th century mannerist portraitist, El Greco infused his portraits with emotion by purposefully elongating the faces and bodies of his subjects. As stated in Portraits: 5,000 Years, "El Greco, who lived from 1541 to 1614, is the true precursor of modern painters. His style forecasts a change that came three centuries later, a shift from proportions determined by nature to proportions determined by emotion" (Walker 123).

Another 16th century artist whose influence, specifically his technique of chiaroscuro, would dominate Baroque art in the seventeenth century was Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio. With Caravaggio's dramatic works, great emotion is revealed.

By the 17th century, interest in personality and individuality prevailed. Two artists in particular achieved this enormous feat, one accomplished this in painting and the other succeeded in sculpture. These artists were Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn and Gian Lorenzo Bernini. Although both artists had unique styles, each created powerful, expressive images that still connect with viewers today.

According to authors Clint Brown and Cheryl McLean in <u>Drawing from Life</u>:

> The notion that personal emotion should be the central source and content of art did not come into vogue until the latter half of the 18th century and the advent of Romanticism, a movement among artists and writers that emphasized personal content and feeling. They asserted the validity of subjective experience as a moving force in human creativity and expression (Brown and McLean 241).

An artist associated with the French Romantic movement is Théodore Géricault. In describing Géricault's *The Raft of the Medusa*, 1818 – 1819, Paul Zelanski, co-author of <u>The Art of Seeing</u>, stated, "Emotions of despair, suffering, and hope are built into a strong double-triangle composition charged with energy. The content of this image is dynamic and passionate" (Zelanski and Fisher 465).

During the late 1900s, artists continued to explore the emotional content of their subjects. One artist in particular who exemplified his concern for the human condition was Vincent van Gogh.

During his lifetime van Gogh produced many expressive portraits, including several self-portraits, which not only showed his mastery for impasto but also gave viewers insight to his state of mind. One example of his intensity and passion is shown in his 1890 *Self-Portrait at St. Remy*. His furrowed brow and direct stare mesmerize the viewer. Evident everywhere is movement; curvilinear swirls of blue, violet, and green undulate throughout the painting. Here is a portrait of a man obsessed with portraying an inner, tormented spirit.

Like his paintings, van Gogh's drawings were expressive due to the use of exaggerated line. In many of his drawings, such as *Short-legged old man*, 1885, van Gogh would continually repeat lines over and over again to emphasize the figure and to give it more presence. Voicing his concern for the human condition, van Gogh stated, "What is a drawing? It is working through an invisible iron wall that seems to stand between what one feels and what one can do" (Brown and McLean 241).

In *Short-legged old man*, van Gogh forces the viewer to acknowledge a grave digger by drawing him frontally with his head slightly down and palms open. As stated in <u>Drawing from Life</u>, "Van Gogh's compassionate rendering seeks to arouse our empathy. He confronts us with this disheveled figure, standing empty handed, needing someone to die in order that he might make his living" (Brown and McLean 242). Further analysis by authors Clint Brown and Cheryl McLean states:

> One aspect of this drawing that is typically characteristic of a figurative humanist approach is the vigorous use of media as an unrestrained record of the artist's process. Notice that van Gogh restates his lines many times, altering the proportions of the grave digger, not to make the figure more attractive or more accurately rendered, but to give the figure more confrontational power. He seems almost to curse us, even as he begs for sympathy. We are not allowed to remain aloof and emotionally unattached (242).

Käthe Kollwitz, who is considered to be a modern expressionist, is another artist who supports the idea that art should be about life. As with van Gogh, Kollwitz was able to convey different moods through the use of expressive line. Her figures, most often sullen and distraught, were the products of a society struggling to come to terms with human conditions, such as poverty, war, and death. Kollwitz also dramatizes her subjects by providing a stark contrast of light to shadow in her images. Such an effect is seen in the 1906 charcoal and crayon drawing, *Worker in Home Industry*, where a strong light focuses the viewer's attention on a downtrodden woman's face. Her shadow silhouettes her stark white face. She seems lost in her thoughts; she's preoccupied with many of life's problems. "For Kollwitz, the figure was always a symbolic metaphor through which to record her views of a struggling humanity and bear witness to what she saw and felt. Kollwitz was a pacifist with profound compassion for the suffering of others" (Brown and McLean 242). Commenting on this statement, Kollwitz said, "I am content that my art should have purposes outside itself. I would like to exert influence in these times when human beings are so perplexed and in need of help" (Brown and McLean 242).

Another drawing by Kollwitz that is emotionally charged is *Mother with Dead Child*, 1903. Using extreme foreshortening, Kollwitz depicts a grieving mother bent over embracing her dead child. Although the viewer cannot see the face of the mother, a sense of loss can be felt.   The gestural lines depicting the figure remain quite sorrowful. According to <u>Drawing from Life</u>, "She does not allow the viewer to maintain a safe, psychological distance. Rather, by drawing her figure large and establishing a low eye level, Kollwitz brings you in close, down on

your knees, to mourn this child's death along with its grief-stricken mother" (Brown and McLean 62). Further examination of Kollwitz's work reveals:

> Kollwitz's view about art reflecting life is common among figurative humanists. The figures are not necessarily drawn directly from life, but inevitably, they are an expression of life. In this respect, humanists often dramatize their subjects, fictionalizing them as in literature or theater. Kollwitz's mood is often reflected in the striking effect of light and dark, which she uses to convey a sense of gloom and sadness. Her work shares with van Gogh's a desire to reach out and communicate with the viewers, to marshal their compassion and support for social change" (Brown and McLean 242 – 243).

As stated in <u>Drawing from Life</u>, both van Gogh and Käthe Kollwitz could be labeled figurative humanists because they use the human figure to express emotion.

> A humanist, by definition, is concerned with human nature and human affairs. Artists who see the human figure as a vehicle through which their work can express human emotions or some measure of the human condition could be defined as humanists. Whether figurative humanists use the figure to convey a particular subject, to represent humanity at large, or as a medium through which to disclose their own psyche, they share a desire to "express" or make known their sensibilities or emotions, even if only to themselves. Expression takes precedence Over composition because the figurative humanists seek to communicate meaning beyond pure aesthetic concerns of composition. They strive to engage us in a poignant experience even at the risk of offending our aesthetic sensibilities" (Brown and McLean 241).

A 20th century artist whose subject matter often deals with the human figure is Jim Dine. In many of his figurative works, Dine develops the surface quality of his drawings by manipulating various materials such as charcoal, pastel, and enamel. Expressionism is often characterized by such an aggressive manipulation of the media. An image that testifies to this vigorous physicality is *Jessie among the Marks*, 1980. In this drawing, Dine varies the line weight and line quality by varying his pressure of the charcoal; the upper left portion of the figure is delineated by a strong, harsh thick black line while the lower limbs, namely the legs, consist of much thinner, gestural lines. Throughout the drawing, Dine consistently chooses to model specific features of the human figure, such as the left breast and left arm, and ignore other parts of the body. By doing so, Dine toys with the idea of depicting a three-dimensional form on a two-dimensional surface. In describing his drawing process, Dine states, "I begin with charcoal, and then I often rub it out almost completely…I know where to go from there and I start to work on an area and just keep working until finally I have to fix it. Then I take an

electric sander or sanding blocks and take out parts of it – arbitrarily sometimes" (Brown and McLean 251). In describing the two characteristics that define the opposite poles of figurative drawing, Dine sides with those artists who create expressive, romantic works. These works ask the viewers to experience what the artist is feeling. On the other side are artists who produce more classical and rational works of art. These works are admired purely for their visual content or how the human body has been composed. (Brown and McLean 251).

In conclusion, figurative humanism has progressed throughout time. Its origin can be linked to portraiture of ancient times, specifically the Greco – Roman period. Gaining acceptance in the Renaissance, the concept of "humanism", or the belief in inherent human dignity, flourished. Later, in the 17th century, Baroque artists embraced figurative humanism and produced many masterful works. Figurative humanism continued throughout the 18th century, following the advent of Romanticism, a movement that emphasized personal content and feeling. Then, in the 20th century, came Expressionism, an art movement which allowed artists to explore psychological states of mind. It is this recent movement that figurative humanism can presently be linked.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL INFLUENCES

When I began my research, portraiture was my main interest. For me, capturing a person's likeness and personality in a drawing has always been a great endeavor. Initially, I wanted to explore the history of portraiture and study how other artists tackled this specific subject matter. What I eventually discovered was quite fascinating.

In broad terms, portraiture means "the likeness of a person." However, a great portrait not only shows a physical likeness, but also captures the essence of the individual's personality. As stated by the artist Henri Matisse, "The character of a face in a drawing depends not upon its various proportions but upon a spiritual light which it reflects" (Brown and McLean 191). Taken literally, "portrait" comes from the Latin word *portrahere*, which means to "draw forth and reveal" (Brown and McLean 191).

Moreover, capturing a sitter's likeness is a difficult task. Art historian John Walker states:

> All portraitists have to work with the same material. Nature has given the human face two eyes, a nose, and a mouth. But eyes can be round, or almond-shaped, noses snub or aquiline, mouths sensual with thick lips or cruel with thin ones. With the arrangement and representation of these features, the artist must create the individuality that enables us to recognize and differentiate people. Moreover, there are many more muscles in the human face than there are to be found in that of any other living creature. Consequently, man alone can express emotion through the movement of his eyes, his mouth, and the skin of his forehead. Such emotional reactions on the sitter's part must be taken into consideration by the portrait artist (9).

Walker continues his discussion on portraiture by stating:

> Portraits have varied between complete objectivity, as seen say in the works of Holbein, and the relative subjectivity brought about by the portraitist's own outlook on life, as we find it in paintings by Rembrandt and Goya. But even the most objective work is affected by the times in which the artist lived, by his relation to his sitter, by his sitter's requirements, and by the technique he employs. These are the elements that make up the history of portraiture (9).

However, as I delved deeper into the history of portraiture, I found that my interest lagged until I discovered the powerful, expressive paintings of the 16th century artist, Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio.

Initially, what impressed me the most about Caravaggio was his dramatic use of light, or chiaroscuro. His figures seemed to emerge from deep, dark shadows into brilliantly lit spaces. Caravaggio achieved this effect through cellar lighting, where he cast a strong, single source of light on the main characters in his paintings. Also, his use of lost and found contour made his figures feel sculptural. His naturalistic style, combined with his ingenuity for spatial tension, completely captivated me. Upon further study, I began to appreciate yet another facet of Caravaggio's imagery; his power to convey emotion. His paintings, although mostly religious in subject matter, contained so much human expression that the feeling they evoked was overwhelming. According to art historian, Helen Langdon, "His greatest gift was for empathy, for making religious narrative new and vivid, and it is through this, and through his compelling personality, that he speaks so directly to the modern age" (1).

One painting that particularly embodies all of Caravaggio's expertise is *Judith and Holofernes*, 1599. Depicted in this extraordinary painting is the gruesome demise of the Assyrian general, Holofernes, by the hands of the Jewish heroine, Judith. By beheading Holofernes, Judith saves her people from destruction. Judith's maid, Abra, willingly aids her mistress in committing this unspeakable act by quickly disposing of Holofernes's decapitated head in a sack. Instead of showing Holofernes asleep, as other artists had portrayed him, Caravaggio chooses to show Holofernes awake and ultimately aware at his moment of death. As stated by Helen Langdon:

> In his interpretation Caravaggio, for the first time confronting the problems of dramatic narrative, created an image of horrifying violence. Holofernes is shown, as Medusa had been, at the very moment of death, his head at the meeting point of strong diagonals. He shrieks, and blood jets from the gash. The space is enclosed, and the dark red of the tent the colour of blood. There is no space between the half-length figures, brought close to the picture plane, so that the viewer, thrust up against the actors, becomes intensely involved in the drama (167).

Another aspect of Caravaggio's work that intrigued me was his sense of immediacy. His ability to give religious imagery new meaning was truly original. "He puts the religious scene back into a real context, into the context of the everyday, renewing its immediacy, re-creating its meaning. This ability to rethink religious imagery and to endow the intensely real with profound resonance remained characteristic of Caravaggio's religious art" (Langdon 149). This ability, to take something that might be seen as ordinary, something familiar, and change its original

meaning into something entirely different, is what I strived for in my work. Like Caravaggio, I wanted to show an instantaneous moment of emotion to the viewer. By cropping his figures, Caravaggio accentuates the tense scene between Judith and Holofernes by concentrating on their gestures and the expressions. Author Helen Langdon explains:

> Although a widow, Judith, partly in white, has an icy, virginal quality, her polished face a cold and formal beauty…Her expression is appalled yet intent, and her heavy gesture has a ritual quality. She is very much a Judith of the 1590s, close to that of Tuccio, the chaste and strong instrument of God, her implacable mission to destroy the devil, as Mary in a later painting, is to tread on the serpent (167).

Langdon continues by stating:

> Holofernes, animal-like, is an incarnation of evil, suggesting the damned souls in many renderings of the Last Judgment. The ritual quality, the frozen expressions and gestures, are also the product of Caravaggio's method of painting from posed models. Incised lines are visible in the picture's surface-around Judith's left arm and shoulder, around the neck of the elderly maid, and around Holofernes' head - and it seems that Caravaggio, working from models, used them, here and elsewhere, to fix the crucial elements of his composition. But he could not cut off his model's head, and X-rays have revealed that he must have asked the model to take a different pose as he developed the composition. His working method, after nature, gave his picture the immediacy of a tableau vivant, perhaps like those that were performed for the Jubilee (167-168).

Interestingly enough, another artist who chose to portray the biblical narrative of Judith was Artemisia Gentileschi. Artemisia was the daughter of the 16th century painter Orazio Gentileschi, a follower of Caravaggio. By incorporating both influences from her father and Caravaggio, Artemisia developed her own unique style and became an influential painter in Florence, Italy. An immediate sense of motion and emotion is present in Artemisia's painting, *Judith Slaying Holofernes*, 1612 - 1613. Unlike Caravaggio's Judith and Abra who seemed staged, Artemisia depicts her characters as strong women actively engaging in the violent moment of decapitation. The theme of Judith would continually be examined by Artemisia throughout her career. The theme held personal importance for Artemisia because she could identify with the Judith character. Artemisia relayed her own personal suffering into her painting of Judith. Earlier in her career, Artemisia had apprenticed under Agostino Tassi, a successful artist known for his fresco decorations in Roman palaces. Unfortunately, Tassi seduced and raped Artemisia in May 1611 and then promised to marry her. Later, as it became clear that

Tassi was not going to marry Artemisia, Orazio Gentileschi filed suit against Tassi. The trial took place in 1612 and lasted for seven months. During that time, Artemisia was tortured on the witness stand with thumbscrews, a 17th century lie detector. Although Tassi served eight months in prison, the case was ultimately dismissed. Sadly, the trial became a public scandal leaving Artemisia utterly humiliated. Feeling unjustified, Artemisia then fueled her unspoken rage into her painting *Judith Slaying Holofernes*. Artemisia gave Judith life; Judith symbolized strength that could overcome male control. Artemisia's identification with a depicted character was not unusual. The idea of self-projection had already been incorporated by her male counterparts such as Giorgione, Titian, Michelangelo, and Caravaggio. They had all fused their own literal self-images with the characters they portrayed in their art. Giorgione painted himself as David, Titian as St. Jerome; and Michelangelo included himself as a victim in his sculpture *Victory*, and as the flayed skin of Bartholomew in the *Last Judgment*. (Garrard 278) In addition, Caravaggio had also depicted himself many times in his paintings. For example, the decapitated head of Goliath in *David and Goliath*, 1605 – 1606, is based on a self-portrait of Caravaggio. He also depicted himself as Bacchus, the god of wine, and as Medusa, the snake-haired Gorgon of Greek myth. (Langdon 120)

Researching Caravaggio led me to two other expressive 17th century artists, Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn and Gian Lorenzo Bernini. Each artist empowered his work with emotional and psychological intensity, two attributes I have sought to express in my own work.

Rembrandt achieved the portrait of profound psychology. He probed deeper; not only did he capture his sitter's physical appearance but he also hinted at inner emotions. Although his earlier works consist of energetic, gestural figures that actively move throughout their space freely, his later works consist of figures more block-like and stationary. As quoted by the art historian Julius S. Held, "Their physical existence is subordinate to their psychological life; what they do is less important than what they feel. Indeed, the weight of their thoughts is apt to impede their capacity for action" (243).

Like many artists before him, Rembrandt painted several self-portraits during his lifetime. As stated in the Art of Seeing, by authors Paul Zelanski and Mary Pat Fisher, "From young manhood to old age, Rembrandt created over one hundred self-portraits, apparently using himself as a model for probing character studies" (16). For example, his 1661 *Self-Portrait*

shows a man whose face is lined with age and scarred with misfortune. Upon analyzing this particular work of art, John Walker affirms the following:

> His eyes looked back at him, large, troubled, and questioning. They had seen more profoundly into the human soul than those of any other artist. But he also recorded a mouth and a chin weak and infirm of purpose. Here, he may have thought, was a clue to a flaw in his character, which had wrecked his life. He seems to plead for our sympathy as he shows us a ruined man. Rembrandt's grief was psychological, provoked by the realization that he had brought destruction on himself through his own folly (159).

While researching Rembrandt, a new realization occurred to me. Like Rembrandt, I too work subjectively. That is, when I work, I am affected by my personal feelings and those feelings are projected into my drawings. Instead of solely concentrating on the formal aspects of the subject before him, Rembrandt chose to focus on the innate human quality of the figure. For example, in his 1642 painting, *The Night Watch*, Rembrandt chose to show a psychological depiction of an advancing militia about to engage in war. Evident everywhere in the image is movement. As one soldier prepares to load his musket, a drummer taps his instrument. Caught in the middle of the advancing soldiers is what appears to be a young girl who seems confused and bewildered by the commotion. This original yet unusual interpretation was not well received by the soldiers who had commissioned Rembrandt to produce a group portrait. Due to Rembrandt's treatment of the subjects, some soldiers were completely obscured in the painting, while others dominated the image. In other words, Rembrandt risked the loss of an important commission by directing his own personal feelings into the painting. He consciously chose not to depict the soldiers in a straight-forward manner. Instead, he chose to use the men as vehicles of a narrative.

As seen in *The Night Watch* and in other various paintings, Rembrandt expressed a wide variety of emotions that ranged from utter joy to sheer humiliation. Upon studying these works, I began to realize that I worked similarly. Whenever I drew the human figure, some emotion was expressed. No longer was an exact likeness deemed important. I began to see that I would use models as symbols to represent what I was feeling. Before long, I realized that my drawings evoked specific moods.

Interestingly enough, my earlier drawings were character studies that exhibited the same quality of self-exploration that Rembrandt had pursued when he created his 1630 *Self-portrait*. In this etching, Rembrandt appears scared, staring out at the viewer with his eyes wide open and

his mouth pursed in anticipation. Rembrandt, like many other seventeenth century artists, sought to capture various emotions in order to communicate a specific feeling. According to John Rupert Martin, author of <u>Baroque</u>:

> Efforts to register the expression of emotions of a less pleasant sort (especially surprise, horror, or pain) are often ingenuous, the result, no doubt, of practicing a series of frightful grimaces before a mirror. Rembrandt's etching of 1630, showing the artist 'open-mouthed and staring' is a typical and amusing specimen of this procedure (74).

Martin continued with, "But these juvenile experiments in self-observation are only the indispensable first steps leading to a more searching exploration of the emotional life" (74).

One work that exemplifies Rembrandt's mastery of psychological space is *Bathsheba with King David's Letter*, 1654. In this painting, Rembrandt shows us a quiet moment of contemplation as Bathsheba slowly lowers King David's letter to her lap. She has just found out that her husband, who was one of the king's generals, had been killed. Her entire body language, from her tilted head to her sorrowful facial expression, lets the viewer understand instantly that this is a decisive moment in her life. What she knew of her life before is now gone. What remains is a mystery. Rembrandt emphasized Bathsheba as the main focus by allowing her illuminated form to fill three-fourths of the painting. The only other figure present in the image is her serving-maid, who consequently, has been abruptly cropped at the lower left-hand side of the painting. Her figure is almost obscured by Rembrandt's heavy dark, earthy tones. It is interesting to note that Rembrandt chose to focus on the precise moment when Bathsheba received the tragic news of her husband. John Rupert Martin maintained:

> It is in fact one of the paradoxes of Rembrandt that this artist, whose early reputation largely rested on his skill in rendering the most violent emotions, should in time have rejected the imagery of turbulence and outward show and instead begun to explore the innermost recesses of the human psyche (79).

Martin continued his analysis by stating:

> In 1654, in his interpretation of the biblical story of Bathsheba's adultery, Rembrandt goes so far as to omit the figures both of King David spying upon the girl from the roof of his palace and of the messenger who delivers the fateful letter. In thus reducing the narrative elements of the episode almost to the point of unintelligibility, the artist concentrates his attention upon two persons- the old serving-maid drying her mistress's feet, who knows nothing of what is taking place, and Bathsheba herself, who, having read David's letter, sits pondering the decision that she must make (79).

Concluding his statement, Martin added:

> To most artists this subject afforded an occasion for the sensuous display of an opulent female form. Rembrandt, however, though his *Bathsheba* is unquestionably one of the finest nudes in Baroque art, brings to light the tragic inner meaning of the story, so that we become conscious not only of the conflicting emotions in the young woman's mind but also of her psychological isolation- the loneliness that besets the individual at a moment of crisis (80).

Although Rembrandt had a distinct manner of painting, namely his expressive impasto, he also shared one other important characteristic most often associated with Baroque artists; he often employed the device of chiaroscuro or the dramatic interplay of light and shadow in his paintings. Rembrandt learned about this spotlight effect from Gerard van Honthorst, a pupil of Caravaggio. Gian Lorenzo Bernini, another seventeenth century Baroque artist, also incorporated this technique into his sculpture. That is, Bernini was acutely aware of how light could dramatically enhance and empower sculpture. An early work that demonstrates this effect is the horrifying bust of *The Damned Soul,* or *Anima Dannata*, 1619. The bust shows a young man screaming as he enters Hell. His shriek is almost audible; his eyes and mouth are stretched wide open in a frozen frightful grimace. Interestingly enough, this bust is supposedly a self-portrait of Bernini himself. Like Rembrandt, Bernini also experimented with varied expressions. Art historian Howard Hibbard explained:

> At the other extreme stand the physiognomic studies of the same years, such as the '*Damned Soul*', which is quite clearly nothing more than the grimacing face of Bernini himself, heightened and stylized. The search for truth in the instantaneous, the inquiry into man's looks and reactions under changing circumstances and, in particular, the study of expressions of surprise, horror, and alarm, were all hallmarks of the painter Caravaggio and his followers (31).

For the most part, Bernini was mainly concerned with expressing emotion by manipulating space, lighting, and surface quality. First of all, many of his sculptures were meant to be seen from one central point of view and, due to their enormous size, the viewer was engaged in the space itself. Secondly, in order to heighten the dramatic nature of many of his sculptures, Bernini often placed them in areas where natural light would fall, therefore illuminating specific features. Third, Bernini was so adept at handling marble that he could differentiate the tactile qualities of rough, course hair to soft, supple flesh. However convincing these illusionist devices could be, nothing was more powerful than the expression Bernini

captured in the faces and gestures of his sculptures. As discussed in the book 17<u>th</u> and 18<u>th</u> <u>Century Art</u>:

> Fully conscious of the expressive potential of hair and drapery, Bernini never neglected to study the primary carriers of emotional communication - faces and hands. The most violently distorted physiognomies belong to his early period, as they do in the art of Caravaggio and Rembrandt: Anchises' horror-stricken eyes as he is carried to safety from burning Troy by his pious son, David's furious concentration as he confronts his fearsome adversary; or the open-mouthed shriek of a damned soul terrified by the fires of Hell (Held and Posner 56).

An excellent example of where emotional fury meets restrained grace is Bernini's *David*, 1623 – 1624. For his commission from the Roman Cardinal Scipione Borghese, Bernini chose to reinterpret the biblical story about David and Goliath by focusing on the climactic moment right before David hurls the stone at the giant Goliath. David's fierce stare, furrowed brow, and clenched teeth show intense concentration; this moment is filled with anxiety and wonderment. Bernini heightened this dramatic moment by activating the actual space of his sculpture. He accomplished this by placing the spectator directly in the middle of the action; the viewer is standing in the exact space where the stone is about to be thrown. Hence, the viewer is in Goliath's space. This direct inclusion of the viewer into the actual space charges Bernini's *David* with passion and intrigue. Author Howard Hibbard emphasized this point by stating:

> David's eyes sight past us: our space is his and will soon be the stone's; we are in an activated space embracing a statue, real spectators, and an unseen adversary who cannot be far away – three levels of existence fused into one. The spatial continuity was originally emphasized by the small plinth (now enlarged), whose edge was gripped by David's toes. A single, heightened moment in time is conveyed even more dramatically by the *David*, the decisive action is not taking place but about to occur (55).

Hibbard concluded, "The *David's* unification of real and artistic space stands at the core of much Baroque art in succeeding years" (57).

Yet another factor that determined the emotional power of *David* was its size. Towering at about six feet high, the enormous sculpture demanded the full attention of the viewer. Stylistically, *David* is classical; he is broad-shouldered and muscular. His massive body is taut with tension as he prepares to destroy his adversary, Goliath, who remains unseen. His feet are set wide apart with all of his body weight resting on his right foot. His upper torso is twisted toward the right side, with one arm steadily lowered behind his body. By placing armor at his

feet, Bernini suggested that this man will use intelligence over brute force to overcome his opponent. The focus of this image is the intense look of concentration on his face. His pensive look, his furrowed brow, clenched teeth, and unruly hair command the viewer's attention. With *David*, Bernini provides the viewer with a fascinating and energetic portrayal of the heroic figure.

Bernini, like Rembrandt, had extraordinary insights into the nature of human psychology. Also, he was completely aware of how religious or mythological texts could be dramatically interpreted. One such example is the *Ecstasy of St. Teresa*, 1645 – 1652.
As explained by John Rupert Martin:

> In the field of devotional art, the interest in extreme states of feeling led to profound changes in the representation of the visionary experience: Bernini's *Ecstasy of St. Teresa* (to take the best known example) may be understood not only as the illustration of a miraculous visitation – the reward of saintliness – but also as a penetrating insight into the psychology of mysticism, in which the self seeks to be released from human limitations and to be absorbed in the infinite. In the same way the great Catholic subjects of death and martyrdom are imbued with a new pathos and a new comprehension of suffering, cruelty, and steadfastness (13).

Commissioned by Cardinal Federigo Cornaro for the Carmelite church of S. Maria della Vittoria, *St. Teresa*, is based on St. Teresa of Avila, who was canonized in 1622. As stated in <u>Baroque</u>, by John Rupert Martin, "Her Life, with the descriptions of her religious experiences, was written between 1563 and 1565. Bernini's ability to penetrate the deeply emotional state of the mystic is evident above all in the face of Teresa" (325). With her head tilted back, her eyes closed, her body limp, and her mouth open – as if moaning – Teresa is caught in a trance-like state. Floating directly above her with an arrow pointed at her breast, is an angel, who smiles down upon Teresa. The angel looks down lovingly at Teresa, acknowledging her acceptance of God's all consuming love. It is this angel that Teresa described as "the angel who thrust a golden spear into her heart, leaving her 'all on fire with a great love of God'." (Martin 103). Art historian Howard Hibbard further describes St. Teresa's altered state:

> She swoons back and at the same time seems to strain forward and upward, as if in the grip of a superhuman force. Her sightless eyeballs are revealed below heavy lids, her lips are parted in that involuntary moan she herself mentioned. It seems quite clear that the angel already pierced her heart with his fiery arrow. The left hand dangles senseless while her feet abandon themselves to the air.

Between head, hand, and feet is seen not so much a body as a mass of cascading drapery that neither clothes nor reveals her (140).

Hibbard continues with, "It has an abstract sculptural life of its own, carrying on the emotional patterning we saw developing in the *Longinus*. In both these works Bernini had to reveal an inner state by external means – a goal rarely approached in antiquity but one with which Bernini was occupied all his life" (140). Also, by using directed light to signify the miracle of divine illumination, Bernini heightened St. Teresa's rapturous moment. Moreover, this manipulation of space and light empowers the viewer's religious experience as he or she encounters the sculpture in its blessed setting. Hibbard maintains:

> Bernini created a sculptured picture of Teresa's Ecstasy, which was itself originally a mental picture as well as a powerful physical phenomenon. The 'truth' of the vision is consequently conveyed on more than one level: ideally we enter the chapel, observe the *Ecstas*y – removed, white, mysteriously illuminated, but also very solid and realistic – and ultimately participate in a religious experience of our own, aided by the mystic concretion hovering before our eyes (138).

Hibbard continued his praise of Bernini by stating:

> His revolution was manifold: he tried to tie sculpture to the mass of its architectural surroundings and he began to relate it to the space enclosed by that architecture – the area in which we ourselves live and move. To do this he smashed the proud isolation of art as an object or entity on its own and made it participate in a larger conception, spatial and psychological; Bernini's sculpture charges the atmosphere of the room and even discourses with its inhabitants (57).

It is precisely this concept of activating space, along with Bernini's phenomenal ability to express emotion through physical gesture that made me question my initial interest in portraiture. By working large, Bernini engaged the entire figure, expressing emotion through body language. Unfortunately, I had yet to embrace this important attribute. Due to the shallow space allowed by the smaller paper size, my initial drawings felt claustrophobic. Emotion could only be hinted at through the use of smaller lines. Also, the focal points almost always centered on the facial expressions, specifically the eyes. At the time, I hadn't yet realized I was allowing the size of the paper dictate how much of the image could be shown. Relative information such as the placement of the hands and the body itself had to be cropped due to the limited space. My marks were being constrained; I was drawing larger than life-sized character studies and losing

pertinent information that could have been saved within a larger format. Also, only the positive figure, that of the head and shoulders, had been engaged. No consideration had been given to fully activate the background space. It had been left empty and, therefore, uninteresting. By not integrating the background space, a viewer could quickly assess the visual information presented by the positive image and then move on to the next drawing without any emotional connection. Lack of involvement is what I desperately wanted to escape from; I wanted to say something with my drawings that I could not say aloud. I wanted to relate to others; I wanted to connect emotionally with the viewer as Bernini had done with his glorious sculptures.

As stated earlier, there are many traits that Caravaggio, Rembrandt, and Bernini share in their respective works. However, there is yet another characteristic that links all three Baroque artists together. They all could be labeled as humanists.

According to Clint Brown and Cheryl McLean, authors of <u>Drawing from Life</u>, "A humanist, by definition, is concerned with human nature and human affairs. Artists who see the human figure as a vehicle through which their work can express human emotions or some measure of the human condition could be defined as humanists" (Brown and McLean 241). As stated in <u>Drawing from Life</u>:

> Whether figurative humanists use the figure to convey a particular subject, to represent humanity at large, or as a medium through which to disclose their own psyche, they share a desire to "express" or make known their sensibilities or emotions, even if only to themselves. In this regard, "expression" takes precedence over composition because the figurative humanists seek to communicate meaning beyond pure aesthetic concerns of composition (Brown and McLean 241).

Continuing their discussion on figurative humanism, Clint Brown and Cheryl McLean explain:

> They strive to engage us in a poignant experience even at the risk of offending our aesthetic sensibilities. Where the figurative formalist approaches the human form in a dispassionate, objective way, concerned with its role as a formal aesthetic element, the humanist approaches the figure as an object of content, using the figure symbolically or metaphorically to convey a meaning beyond its form, even beyond the frame or context of the drawing (241).

Through their unique insight and mastery of craft, Caravaggio, Rembrandt, and Bernini encompassed this concept of humanist values. Each artist produced masterful works of art that still emotionally connect to viewers today.

CHAPTER 4

CONTEMPORARY INFLUENCES

After researching the Baroque artists Caravaggio, Rembrandt, and Bernini, I made several discoveries which helped me to interpret my work in contemporary terms. Baroque artists were greatly influenced by the Renaissance, which primarily focused on the revival of ancient Greek and Roman ideals. Author John Rupert Martin states:

> No account of Baroque art can fail to take notice of the pervasive influence of classical antiquity. The knowledge of the ancient world, which had been steadily accumulating since the early days of the Italian Renaissance, was now very extensive, and almost all artists of the seventeenth century were affected in one way or another by the images and ideas of the Antique. Though it is true that at this period 'antiquity' was commonly understood to mean ancient Rome, Greek sculptures of the classical age were already being sought after by discerning collectors, and some artists were even prepared to affirm the superiority of Greek art over Roman (16).

Consequently, humanism or the belief in the human condition, found its origins in the Renaissance period due to the influence of philosopher Leon Battista Alberti. "For we are so formed by nature as to sympathize with what we see, and we can only perceive the motions of the mind through the motions of the body" (Clark 95). According to Dr. Robert J. Belton, art historian of Okanagan University College, humanism can be defined as:

> …any attitude that gives priority to human endeavors, rather than to those of the gods, the spirits, the animals, or any other non-human thing. The term is frequently qualified, as in "Renaissance humanism", which is characterized by a love of the achievements of the Greco – Roman world, an optimism that humans are inherently endowed with the skills necessary to reshape the world according to their own needs, and a belief in inherent human dignity (Belton, 1996-2002, n.p.).

David Mayernik, co-editor of Humanist Art Review, concedes, "If one were to ask what the Renaissance was a rebirth of, the answer would be 'Humanism'" (Mayernik, par. 3). In an excerpt from his forthcoming book, Memory & The Muses, Mayernik continues his discussion on humanist art by stating, "Humanism acknowledges the commonality of human experience across time, both external experience (in response to the constant physical forces of the natural world we share) and internal experience (by focusing on the timeless aspects of human emotions, intellect and spirituality)" (Mayernik, par. 2). Mayernik concludes, "To be humanist is to

acknowledge our capacity for the good and the beautiful, and to intervene positively in the world" (Mayernik, par. 6).

Finally, expressionism can be linked to humanism in regards to how an artist relates his or her feelings to subject matter. As stated by Clint Brown, "For many artists, expression is a process more internal than external, more personal than social or political. In addition to expressing empathy or compassion for others, the drawn figure can be a means by which to proclaim and verify one's own individuality" (Brown and McLean 249 – 250). As discussed in Drawing from Life:

> In the Romantic view of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and more recently among the Abstract Expressionists of the 1950s, art was viewed as springing forth from strong emotions, as a kind of catharsis. Spontaneity and self-expression were central tenets manifest in an energetic use of media and dramatic and emotive subject matter (Brown and McLean 250).

After internalizing all of this information, I realized that my work reflects the same ideals held by figurative humanists. Drawing from Life asserts that figurative humanists use the human figure as vehicles for expressing emotion; these artists strive to communicate their personal feelings through their works. Figurative humanists symbolically use the figure to convey a particular subject or express their concern for the human condition. The human figure can also be used by figurative humanists as a medium in which to disclose their own psyche. A figurative humanist does not approach the human figure objectively; that is, he or she does not see the figure purely as a formal aesthetic element.

> The formalist approach to the figure is primarily a disciplined and rational one, governed by the intellect. The artists maintains objectivity in analyzing the figure, focusing on physically observable phenomena – the play of light, the structural relationships of form, the body's spatial position and relationship to its environment, or the delineation of shapes on the two-dimensional picture plane A figurative formalist is 'relationship-minded' rather than 'subject-minded'. An artist with this bias is concerned with self-restrained pictorial relationships rather than conveying meaning or expressive content (Brown and McLean 219).

An artist who exemplifies the ideals presented by figurative formalism in contemporary art is Phillip Pearlstein. Pearlstein, who is considered a New Realist, views the figure as a compositional device and positions the figure according to how it fits within a structural arrangement. In an analysis of Pearlstein's work, Drawing from Life states:

Pearlstein's nudes, in spite of their undeniable physical presence, are not to be interpreted as metaphorical symbols, as part of a narrative. He seeks to remain completely objective. Pearlstein, like Diebenkorn, Bischoff, Hopper, and Thiebaud, wants his nudes to be psychologically inaccessible. They do not interact with the artist or the viewer or one another. Although he offers sensory material – furniture, oriental rugs, naked flesh – we are expected to keep our distance and to appreciate these objects on a higher, abstract level (Brown and McLean 227).

As mentioned earlier, I align myself with figurative humanists. Drawing the human figure allows me to vent my emotions and communicate ideas I find difficult to verbalize. By researching the information presented in Drawing from Life, I have gained new insight into my work. Following the contemporary assumption that art is a means of personal expression, I now see my drawings as contemporary works of art due to their emphasis on the individual, namely me. With my earlier works, I struggled to find my voice and often censored ideas before fully embracing them. However, as my confidence grew, I began to formulate ideas on how to present myself in altered psychological states. This awareness for a need to express emotion can also be seen in the drawings created by Clint Brown. Brown, co-author of Drawing from Life, is a professor of art at Oregon State University. He has taught drawing, painting, and sculpture at Oregon State University since 1970. His works have been shown throughout the Northwest. Most recently, Brown has created drawings which attempt to integrate formal and humanistic concerns. Through his interpretation of the figure, Brown discusses 'the cultural conflict between "nude" and "naked"' (Rinaldi, Feb. 1, 2002, par. 2)

In an article entitled "*Artist celebrates Human Physicality by the act of Drawing*" writer Sylvie Pederson describes Clint Brown's drawings as beautiful and yet disturbing. "There is tremendous beauty to Brown's drawings, underpinned by his technical skill and thorough understanding of human and animal anatomy (he does not draw from live models but from memory and imagination). But this is not necessarily classical beauty, and never is it cosmetic. It also can be disturbing." (Pederson, 2003, par 3)

The drawings Sylvie Pederson refers to in the article published for The Register-Guard, were a series of large-scale charcoal drawings which were exhibited at Jacobs Gallery from August 1 to September 6, 2003. Although the series of drawings dealt with three distinctive themes, the underlying element prevalent throughout all of them was that of figurative humanism. "Unlike a formalist, a humanist is more interested in human events and human

concerns. The figure starts to have meaning besides just being a form or a compositional device" (Pederson par. 3).

As stated by Pederson, "Brown's earliest series, "*The Plague Drawings*," were created in response to the AIDS pandemic. They are visual allegories exploring the dangers and ambiguities of human desire" (Pederson par. 4). Present in all of these drawings is a skeleton who represents the medieval symbol of death and Azrael, the angel of death. *Azrael's Seduction,* one of the drawings in the first series, is described by Pederson as follows, "In this image, a young woman's face expresses deep anxiety as her sexual partner takes on the attributes of death. He depicts vividly the transition from passion to fear – a clear reference to the changing view of sexuality brought about by the 1980s AIDS epidemic" (par 6). In Brown's second series, he deals with the destructive nature of man and his relationship to the environment. In his words, Brown states, "The second group I think of as an environmental advocacy series. My goal with these was to draw attention to humankind's domination and stewardship of the environment" (Rinaldi, 2003, par. 3) In describing the second series of drawings, Pederson states:

> A recurrent motif is that of a solitary man, naked and bald, perched on a platform from which hang skulls and wretched hunting and fishing trophies. His latest trophy is the bald eagle, held upside down in inverted orientation from the U.S. crest, indicating the ultimate destruction of the American environment (par. 8).

According to Pederson, Brown's third group of drawings, "*Studies in Sanguine,*" explore "issues of privacy versus public scrutiny" (Pederson par 9). She continues by stating, "It blurs distinctions between the concepts of the nude (inherited from classical Greece and a purely aesthetic notion) and nakedness (shameful since the book of Genesis), as well as between formalist and humanist aesthetic approaches" (par 9). Commenting on the formal structure of this particular series, Pederson adds "The figures in these images are anonymous and impersonal, their faces indistinct or altogether cropped. The pictorial space often is flattened and designed, broken up by geometric lines that emphasize its two-dimensionality, or treated decoratively in a manner that subtly refers back to Henri Matisse" (par 10).

Stylistically, Brown uses exaggerated lines to emphasize the actions of his figures in his drawings. These gestural lines empower his figures and inject movement into his images. Working as a sculptor has helped Brown understand the importance of line, or how line can be used to model three-dimensional form. "My line is very tactile. It's kind of an extension of

touch." (par 19). Sylvie Pederson adds, "At once vigorous and tender, it conveys both motion and emotion. Similarly, Brown uses the tonal range between light and dark 'not to convey the play of light, but rather to sculpt, almost in a tactile way.' By sculpting the form rather than rendering light, makes Brown 'more like a Florentine artist'" (par 20). Pederson continues her review by stating:

> Each of Brown's drawings is a story, a dramatization of great expressive force. Yet the true power of these drawings does not reside in their narrative quality or their meaning, but in the way they are drawn (par 13). The sensuousness that results signals a departure from the cerebral aesthetics of formalism. By emphasizing the physicality of the act of drawing, Brown celebrates the physicality of the body (par 21).

Concluding the article, Pederson states:

> Brown draws his figures first in one position, then in another, leaving the first one in place. Such shifts in position through the pictorial plane suggest movement in time and allow a narrative to emerge (par 16). Moreover, Brown is not interested in representing the ideal human body, but rather the expressive body. Use of pentimenti (Italian for "change of mind") provides dynamism to his drawings (par 15).

Researching the work of figurative humanist Clint Brown excited me. By viewing his works of art and by relating to the meanings behind them, I connected completely to him conceptually. That is, I respect his idealist views in voicing social concern for mankind. Although I share many stylistic similarities with Clint Brown, such as incorporating gestural lines to empower the figure with movement in my drawings, I differ from him in the way that I have chosen to focus primarily on myself in my most recent work. Unlike Brown, I do not create work based on social commentary; I am not dealing with external factors. In many of his drawings, Brown uses generalized figures to represent the human body. However, I use my own image as a vehicle for expressing my thoughts and feelings. I am dealing with internal issues. My drawings deal with psychological states of mind; they represent my fears, my insecurities, my regrets, and my feelings of codependence. Hence, my own personal strife is the motivation behind my drawings.

Another artist whose subject matter deals with the human form is Jack Beal. Evident in his work is his sense of passion about painting the human figure. As quoted in the article, "Jack Beal's Portraits of Life", from American Artist, Beal states "People are the most important things

in the world. In real life, interactions between people are incredible. The way to represent these

interactions in a painting is to include figures that respond to the implied presence of a viewer"

(Doherty 34). He continues by stating that "there should be a circular flow of movement

between the world inside and outside the canvas that breaks the barriers that exist between the

two. For instance, a figure looking directly at the viewer is the most direct contact. In many of

my paintings, I make myself the figure looking directly at the viewer so I will become the

narrator or guide through the painting" (34). Beal adds, "I want to make art like life and life like

art" (Doherty 34). As stated by M. Stephen Doherty in <u>American Artist</u>:

> One of the most distinguishing aspects of Beal's paintings is the compositional
> arrangement of shapes, patterns, and spaces. There is an overwhelming sense of
> movement in his pictures accentuated by diagonal shapes pointing into and out of
> the picture plane, an asymmetrical arrangement of objects, bulging forms, and
> tilted surfaces (34).

An excellent example showcasing Beal's expertise on formal structure is *The Painting

Lesson*, 1980 -1981. Within this complex image, the artist depicts himself with two other figures

inside a painting studio. Writer William Henning, Jr. states:

> The two students are real individuals. The woman, whose name is Ellen
> Hutchenson, is not actually a painter, but rather Beal's bookkeeper. The bearded
> man is artist-friend Dean Hartung. Amidst the seeming clutter of the room, one
> may find fragmentary visual references to works by eighteen artists whom Beal
> admires, including: David, Velasquez, Rembrandt, Rubens, Titian, Caravaggio,
> Millet, Corot, and Manet (par. 2).

Further describing the painting, Henning, Jr. continues:

> The plastic "Visible Man" at lower left center is, according to Beal, an important
> personal symbolic device, to suggest that beauty originates from within the self.
> The curious dark painting on the easel in the background, upper right corner, is
> another self-portrait. That he here appears to be stabbed in the back by the blade-
> like edge of an artwork alludes to an unpleasant experience he had while teaching
> at the Skowhegan Art School in Maine (par. 2).

The writer concludes, "All of these "props" are components in a carefully staged

arrangement of shapes, textures, angles, and directions. Moreover, the heavy tactile, richly

colored, and dramatically lighted tableau is mildly reminiscent of the Dutch still-life tradition."

(par. 2) Beal, being interviewed, stated "I am making twentieth-century pictures, but I've

learned a lot from my sixteenth-and seventeenth-century colleagues." (Henning, Jr. 1).

Henning, Jr. concludes his review by stating, "Though he prefers to call himself a life artist rather than a realist, he is undeniably one of the principal figures responsible for the revival of realist and narrative art as valid and critically recognized contemporary expression" (par. 4).

Due to Beal's Baroque influences, I definitely see parallels between his work and mine. Stylistically, we both favor strong asymmetrical compositions that engage the viewer fully. Also, dramatic lighting is an important element in Beal's work; I too employ the device of chiaroscuro to achieve more emotional impact. Another similarity is the integration of real space with fictive space. Beal likes to engage the viewer by painting his figures staring out at them from inside the picture plane. "Involving the observer as an active participant is a characteristic of much of Beal's work. He acknowledges: "Communications with the audience has become for me as necessary a factor as the aesthetics of the picture." (par. 1).

Lucian Freud, a 20th century painter, also deals with the human figure but in a different style. His perception of the figure is unwavering. According to Michael Kimmelman, author of Portraits: Talking with Artists at the Met, the Modern, the Louvre and Elsewhere:

> Freud's own paintings, of course aren't precisely narrative, although lately they have had figures in odd configurations-under beds, in attic windows-which seem to imply stories. They invariably have to do with the plasticity of pigment simulating flesh. They are about an evasive psychological inwardness, a sense of the otherness of objects and people, scrutinized like specimens under a hard, enveloping light. Freud likes to talk about the truth of what he depicts, by which he means the truth of the human transaction between him and his models. His paintings of figures are tough, impacted, unforgiving of their subjects, and in that respect they do not lie (99 – 100).

Kimmelman continues his discussion about Freud by citing how Freud enjoys looking at works by Old Master artists, specifically Rembrandt. In his interview with Kimmelman, Freud states:

> You feel you are being privileged because Rembrandt is giving you an ennobling insight into the nature of people. I don't mean he has made the people seem virtuous, but I mean it is ennobling to be told something so truthful. For instance, as people get older, the difference between the way men and women look diminishes. Rembrandt observed this closely, so that Jacob Trip's wife, Margarethe de Geer, actually transcends gender. As he got older and older, Rembrandt also made himself seem more like an old woman in his self-portraits (Kimmelman 104-105).

Freud concludes his discussion of Rembrandt by stating:

Actually, with Rembrandt, I don't necessarily feel that the portraits are like the people themselves. With Ingres, I do. Or with Géricault. But with Rembrandt, apart from the self-portraits, maybe, I don't think that getting the personalities right was always his concern. After all, he chiefly painted businessmen, and I don't think businessmen were any more interesting then than they are now (Kimmelman 105-106).

Although there is a psychological detachment inherent in Freud's works, stylistically I enjoy how Freud models the flesh of his nudes. Strange abstract shapes can be seen in his paintings of nude models, such as his *Leigh Under the Skylight*, 1994. With this in mind, I too abstract the ordinary in order to communicate my feelings more succinctly.

Figurative humanism has had a varied past throughout the centuries and is now enjoying a new found popularity in the 21st century. For me, figurative humanism makes it acceptable to express my thoughts and feelings. Using their own distinct style, artists such as Clint Brown, Jack Beal, and Lucian Freud pay tribute to the human figure. In that respect, all three artists could be labeled as figurative humanists.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF WORK

When I began my graduate studies at ETSU, portraiture was my main focus. I had always been intrigued at how much emotion the human face could show. Also, capturing a person's likeness had always been a great challenge for me and I wanted to explore this traditional subject further. However, as I have stated before, my interest waned until I discovered the dynamic, emotional works of Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, Rembrandt Hermanzoon van Rijn, and Gian Lorenzo Bernini. Upon researching these artists, I connected immediately with them. Their works encompassed all the qualities that I had striven for in my work. The essential Baroque characteristics concerning naturalism, psychology, space, time, and light are all elements that are reflected in my artwork, specifically in my later drawings. In this chapter, I discuss how these traits relate to my work, both stylistically and conceptually. In addition to analyzing the drawings formally, I explain the idea behind each of them. Also included is a discussion of my working method and how photography plays an important role in producing my images.

In the early stages of their artistic developments, Caravaggio, Rembrandt, and Bernini explored character studies. Most often, they would use themselves as models to study varied facial expressions. Each artist strove to succinctly portray a range of extreme emotions, such as pain, horror, or surprise. One example is Rembrandt's 1630 *Self-Portrait*. In this self-exploratory study, Rembrandt shows a look of surprise with his eyes widened and his mouth pursed. My early efforts reflect this same searching. In *Longing* (Figure 1), I achieved an extreme sense of sadness. What initially started out as a straightforward self-portrait quickly turned into a wearisome image full of despair. At that time in my life, I was experiencing some abrupt changes. Being new to the graduate program, I was feeling insecure and pressured by my workload. Not only was I homesick, but also I was physically ill. For weeks I had nursed a bad cold and the tiredness showed on my face. The faraway look in my eyes longed for comfort. Hence, the title of the drawing, *Longing*. Although I did not intentionally mean to create a sad, lonesome image, I did. The weariness reflected in the mirror transferred over into my drawing.

Most often I work from direct observation. Such was the case with *Longing*. Due to my penchant for dramatic lighting, a technique most often employed by Baroque artists, I lit myself from beneath. Drawing with charcoal and conté crayon, I created an asymmetrical composition

of my head tilting toward the left side of the paper. As I built up the initial gesture of my head, I observed how the light formed unusual shadows on my face, particularly around the eyes and the bridge of the nose. Upon noticing these odd shapes, I began to embellish them, thus heightening the depressed mood of the image. I would continue showing these strange abstractions in my later work on a much larger scale.

Figure 1: Longing, 1999, charcoal, white Conte' crayon, sanguine, 25 x 19"

Also adding to the overall gloom of the image was the gray of the paper itself. Working on gray Strathmore paper, I emphasized my gestural lines by bearing down on the pressure of the charcoal in certain areas, specifically on the right side of the head where most of the shadows fell. Although thick dark, gestural lines move continuously throughout the drawing, I carefully controlled the thinner contour lines around the eyes, nose, and mouth. With the cold gray of the paper used as a medium value, I emphasized my highlights with a white conté crayon. These highlights appear mostly on the left side of the face; they can be seen on the tip of the nose, on the upper brow, on the strands of hair, and reflected in the tired eyes. Due to my heavy use of gestural lines, I needed to use a sanguine conté crayon to distinguish the shirt from the neck. This addition of color added warmth to the overall waxy appearance of the figure.

Increasing in size and complexity, my next drawing, *Self-Portrait II* (Figure 2), is another exaggerated image of myself. Staring back directly at the viewer is a larger than life-sized image of a woman with her hair swept back from her face and her left-shoulder bared. Although the gaze is direct, fragility shows in her eyes. This hint of emotion is heightened through the combined use of gestural and contour lines.

Following the same working method used to create *Longing*, I drew from direct observation and placed the lighting directly beneath me. By drawing myself slightly off- center

towards the left side of the picture plane, I created an interesting asymmetrical composition. Visual weight dominates the left side of the drawing.

Figure 2: Self Portrait II, 2000, charcoal, white Conte' crayon, 30 x 22"

Evident more so in this drawing than in the previous image is the heavy use of gestural lines, especially in the face and neck. When I draw, I tend to bear down hard. In my mind, I have to carve out the subject from the empty space of the background. Due to the smoothness of the Stonehenge paper I was drawing on, I could not erase the heavy sweeping lines I initially laid down in building the drawing. At the time, I was discouraged by the fact that I could not remove the heavy marks. However, I now celebrate these marks because they bear witness to the development, or life, of a drawing. These searching marks validate the two-dimensional surface.

After gesturing in the head and shoulders with charcoal, I carefully observed the curving contours of the face and neck. Due to the dramatic lighting, a stark value pattern is set up, with most of the light hitting the face on the left side. Within this area, highlights appear on the lower portion of the neck and move upwards, illuminating the lips, the tip of the nose, the left eye, the upper left brow, and parts of the hair. To create these highlights, I used a white conté crayon. On the right side of the face unusual abstract shadows begin to emerge. These weird shadows trickle down the right side of the face and fall on the right shoulder. Balancing out these smaller areas of darker values is the larger shadow situated on the bare left shoulder of the figure. I was able to create this dark area by using the broad side of my charcoal. As with *Longing*, the medium value was determined by the color of the paper, which in this case was light tan.

An important development with this drawing is the inclusion of the background space. Because my main interest started out in portraiture, my early drawings primarily showed an emphasis on developing the positive shape and the negative space surrounding the figure. At

that time, no consideration had been taken to include the background space. It had been left empty or void, and, therefore, uninteresting. I had yet to realize that the viewer would not be engaged fully if the only visual information presented in the image was the positive figure. In keeping with the standards of traditional portraiture, I often cropped the figure to where only the head and shoulders showed. Later, as I started working larger, more of the figure emerged and I began to understand that even more emotion could be expressed by showing more of the body. The larger size of the later drawings challenged my ability to solve problem of how to deal with the figure/ground relationship in an image.

My third drawing, *Slick Eye* (Figure 3), is weakest in the series of the earlier drawings exhibited in the MFA exhibition, *Marking Time*. Although it does portray some slight emotion of anger, the figure glares out at the viewer in indifference. Using the same working method mentioned earlier, I set up lights and then posed before a mirror to draw my reflected image. After deciding upon an asymmetrical pose, I began to quickly gesture what I saw. Perhaps the haughty pose heightens the feeling of coolness in the image. Nevertheless, what makes this drawing weak in my opinion is the fact that it is unresolved stylistically. Although great care was taken to develop the head, the remainder of the figure, namely the upper torso, is atrophied. More time should have been taken to resolve the

Figure 3: Slick Eye, 2001, charcoal, white Conte' crayon, 30 x 22"

lower half of the image; by allowing for a fuller value range to develop in the lower portion of the drawing, unity could have been achieved. Also lacking is the empty background space. No attempt, other than the harshly cropped chair located at the lower left of the image, had been made to integrate the positive shape with the negative space.

However unresolved it may be, there are some positive statements that can be made about *Slick Eye*. First, more of the body is being shown, therefore providing an opportunity for more emotion to be expressed. This development would challenge me to draw larger, thus empowering the human figure's capability for transmitting emotion. Second, due to lighting myself from beneath and presenting myself from a worm's eye view, I made myself appear monumental, like a large sculpture. This decision most definitely affected the compositional choices I made later on with my larger drawings because three of the four large drawings were drawn from a worm's eye view, or low eye level. Third, after completing *Slick Eye*, I happened across an image of one of my contemporary influences, Jack Beal. In his 1974 lithograph, *Self-portrait*, Beal portrays himself in the same asymmetrical pose that I chose for *Slick Eye*. Remarkably, due to the dramatic lighting and worm's eye view presented in Beal's image, he had drawn similar abstract shapes where the shadows had fallen across the right side of his face. These same odd shapes could also be seen in *Slick Eye*. Moreover, the same sense of indifference expressed in *Slick Ey*e is present in Beal's self-portrait. Seeing this similarity spurred me to research Jack Beal more. In doing so, I discovered that most of his influences were Baroque artists, such as Velasquez, Rembrandt, and Caravaggio. In learning this I felt connected to Jack Beal; here was another artist who was fascinated in "seeing" the outside world.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, I see similarities between my later work and the expressive works of Caravaggio, Rembrandt, and Bernini due to essential Baroque characteristics present in their works of art. I will attempt to make these similarities clear by describing my work fully and by providing key examples where they apply.

It is important to note that all of my earlier works were created through direct observation. When drawing myself, I would pose under carefully placed lights and draw my reflected image. However, when I began to work larger, I chose to trace my drawings from projected photographs of myself. This process helped me greatly by saving time. By tracing a photograph, I was free to quickly get all of my proportions correct. After that, I was free to reinterpret the image as deemed necessary.

The major role that photography plays in my artwork is that it allows me to see myself in the third person. By using photographs as points of reference, I am able to see myself as others see me. For example, I would not have been able to create my large drawing, *Dead Weighting*

(Figure 6), had it not been for taking photographs of me from a bird's eye point of view. As stated in <u>Drawing from Life</u>:

> Since the camera was invented, artists have used it as a resource, and its influence can be seen in the work of Degas, Seurat, Toulouse-Lautrec, and Eakins, to name a few. The photograph can be a useful way to record and store information and an efficient means of studying the effects of light. For artists concerned with structure, its significance lies in its ability to focus and edit visual information (Brown and McLean 231.)

Although I referenced photographs in order to view specific lighting effects, I did not duplicate the effects exactly. Through my reinterpretation of the photographs, I altered the images of myself. By incorporating various design elements such as line, value, and texture, I created dramatic images of heightened emotion in my larger drawings.

Many changes took place when I finally made the switch to drawing larger. Most obvious is the change in scale. Before when I drew the figure, I had to crop out visual information purely for the reason that I could not fit it within the smaller framework. Also, I did not want to sacrifice my mark-making by drawing smaller. However, I hadn't expected to enjoy the physicality of drawing large. I instantly felt more alive by using my whole body to make a mark four feet tall than a mark four inches high. Working large freed me to gesture the entire human form, one of the main aspects of drawing that I love. Gestural lines suggest movement, and by allowing myself a larger space to fill, I could explore the challenge of juxtaposing three-dimensional form with two-dimensional pattern.

Generally speaking, all four large charcoal drawings exhibit similar stylistic traits. With each of them, I strived to create a dynamic, dramatic composition complete with varied textures and patterns. Present in each image is a constant ebb and flow of line, shape, and value. Where I carefully control the contour of a line in one place, I let go in another, allowing the gestural line to breathe. Strong diagonals aid in moving the viewer's eye throughout each work; also a skewed perspective enhances each drawing's mystique. By presenting these drawings from a bird's eye view, I heighten the sense of monumentality of each work. Also, through careful modeling and close observation of light falling over form, I achieved a sense of volume in each work, therefore giving each piece a sculptural feel.

Conceptually, each large charcoal drawing has a specific meaning. Although three of them deal with the constant idea of struggle in some way, they each speak about different

psychological states of mind. The spaces presented in the drawings aren't meant to be seen as real; they are fictive spaces created by me in order to express my thoughts at a given moment. The drawings represent my thoughts and feelings, my insecurities, and my fears.

Figure 4: Slipknot, 2002, charcoal, white Conte' crayon, 66 x 42"

Slipknot (Figure 4) has an interesting history, for it evolved from a moment of inspiration. Looking through photographs taken of me in a darkened studio, I came across one that caught me in the act of moving my arms in front of my face. Interestingly at the moment the photograph was taken, only a slight portion of my mouth could be seen. The rest of my face was obscured by my raised arms. Looking at the photograph, I instantly thought of Michelangelo's *The Awakening Slave*, 1520-1523. Emerging out the darkness was this strange abstracted form. I can honestly say that at that moment, I was truly blessed with inspiration. An idea had never come that easily to me just by glancing at random photographs. Also the execution of the drawing itself went swiftly. Incredibly, I completed *Slipknot* in four days.

What wasn't easy about finishing the long vertical drawing was deciding what to do with the bottom portion of the image. I only had a photograph of me from the waist up. Before long, I imagined myself being tangled up in a rope struggling to break free. About the same time I started drawing *Slipknot,* I was studying Classical Art. One of the more emotional works of art I connected with was the Hellenistic sculpture, *Laocoön*, circa A.D. 50. Based on a Greek myth from Virgil's <u>Aeneid</u>, Laocoön was a Trojan priest who warned the other Trojans not to trust the Greeks. Being suspicious of the Wooden Horse given to the Trojans by the Greeks, Laocoön casts a glance at the horse's flank. Presumably, this defiant action angered Athena. Punishing Laocoön for his act of sacrilege, the Gods sent forth two gigantic sea-snakes to kill Laocoön and

his sons while they were preparing a sacrifice by the shore. What ensues is horrific; according to legend, the sea-serpents rose out of the sea and attacked Laocoön and his two sons. The more Laocoön struggled, the tighter the serpents coiled around him and his two sons. Death will soon embrace him and his youngest son. His older son will escape.

Laocoön exemplifies human suffering; the tortured expression frozen on the face of the father as he tries to free himself and his sons from the powerful serpents' grips is mesmerizing. Their bodies, entangled in the coils of the snakes, writhe to break free. One can almost feel their pain as they cry out in agony.

Laocoön inspired *Slipknot*. I connected with the physical pain Laocoön must have felt because at that time, I was becoming increasingly physically ill and did not understand the cause of it. It is fitting that I drew the rope ensnaring me around my abdomen; later that year I was diagnosed with Crohn's disease.

Figure 5: Donna Nike, 2002, charcoal, white Conte' crayon, 50 x 77"

Although at the time, I did not make the connection, *Donna Niké* (Figure 5) can also be linked to Classical Art. While trying to come up with an energetic pose, I crouched down between two drawing stands in the studio and pushed them away from me as I started to stand up. *Donna Niké* shows this moment of determination. The actual physical tension of me pushing away from the stands as I get up translated to real visual tension in the photograph. "Hope" is present on the face as the head tilts upward toward the right side of the image. The gesture of the body itself suggests a twisting movement as if I were going to leap up and take flight. A trompe-l'oil effect is accomplished due to the right knee coming forward in space as the right hand diminishes in size. To counterbalance this effect, the left hand comes forward in space. As stated in the book Baroque:

> The principle of coextensive space is an important one in Baroque art. It may be seen in its most obvious form in the various trompe-l'oil devices employed by artists to dissolve the barrier imposed by the picture plane between the real space of the observer and the perspective space of the painting or, in the case of sculpture, in the statue that transcends the limits of the niche within which it stands (Martin 14).

Author John Rupert Martin continues by stating, "Caravaggio, in his *Supper at Emmaus*, circa 1600, relies on emphatic gestures which appear to thrust through the picture plane in order to persuade us that we are actually present at this unexpected intervention of divinity into the everyday world" (157).

In producing *Donna Niké*, I worked additively and subtractively with charcoal and white conté crayon. I would block in large areas with the charcoal and then slash through it with an eraser to get the diagonal marks present in the drawing. These quick diagonal and vertical slashes permeate throughout the image. The architectural elements of the drawing stands help to counterbalance the free-flowing organic shapes seen in the figure. The visual weight of the figure leans toward the right side of the drawing. Irregular marks help the viewer to see my hand in the work. Also, strange abstract shapes form within the clothing of the figure. The folds seen in the shirt over the left arm come forward in space. The repetition of these curvilinear lines is repeated in an undulating sequence by the tangles of my hair. It looks as if wind were blowing against the form; it is as if I am about to take flight as only Niké, or winged victory, could.

Dead Weighting, (Figure 6) is the only large charcoal drawing in the series of the larger drawings that actually contains sepia ink washes underneath the charcoal. This added warmth gives the drawing an added dimension. Also, in this image, a value range of subtle grays is achieved. The other three drawings contain stark contrasts of light and dark.

Taken from a bird's eye view, this asymmetrical composition shows a physical struggle occurring. The figure is trying to thrust herself upward in an attempt to escape those who hold her down. The right knee comes forward in space as the model tries to step up and away from her captors. Energetic diagonal slashes of black Nu-Pastel incorporate more movement into the drawing. Also, the tilted perspective adds to the physical struggle taking place.

Dead Weighting is about codependence. A person who is codependent often seeks self-worth by helping others. I often feel I go out of my way to help people and am angered when I get nothing back. Because I expend all of my energy on other people, I often feel resentment

towards my friends, family, students, etc. In fact, I have no energy left to concentrate on what is important in my life, "me". In the image, I am being pulled down by two mysterious hands, yet because of my body language, I am struggling to pull up and away from the hands that are holding me down. This drawing shows how I am struggling to work through my personal problems; I am struggling to finally find out who I am.

Figure 6: Dead Weighting, 2002, sepia ink, charcoal, white crayon, white Conte' crayon, 50 x 81"

In composing *Dead Weighting*, I chose to work all the way to the edges of the paper. The immediate foreground is shallow space and thus forces viewers to interact with the drawing.

Caravaggio achieved this effect with *Judith and Holofernes*, 1599. By cropping his figures, the viewer becomes engaged in the horrific scene as Judith beheads Holofernes. The physical tension seen in *Dead Weighting* is emphasized by the dramatic interplay of light or dark, or chiaroscuro. Also, according to John Rupert Martin, "The impact of Caravaggio's chiaroscuro manner, and the meaning that it held for his younger contemporaries, may be gauged from the great wave of Caravaggism that swept over western Europe in the first decades of the seventeenth century" (223).

Overcast (Figure 7) is similar in format to *Slipknot* due to its vertical frame. However, it differs from *Slipknot* in its mood; *Overcast* depicts a quiet moment of regret. Like *Dead Weighting*, it deals with codependence and how one feels guilty for past inactions. Composed of strong diagonals which form a stable triangle, this particular image is different in the way that it implies a stronger narrative due to all of the visual clues given within the drawing. Unlike the other large charcoal drawings, this challenging work hints at a deeper space within the pictorial plane; there is a definite foreground, middle ground, and background present in the image.

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Varied textures ranging from velvety smooth surfaces to harsh, rough surfaces permeate the image.

Figure 7: Overcast, 2002, charcoal, white Conte' crayon, 63 x 38"

As the cropped second figure comforts the first one, a sense of regret or remorse is felt. The downward tilt of the head, the closed eyes, the slumped shoulders, and the firmly clasped hands all signal a regretful silence. The two dolls on the table immediately in front of the figure represent past memories of childhood while the two still-life objects, a clown's head and a cast of a baby doll's head, located in the immediate foreground at the lower left hand side, represent possible future memories. Due to its realistic nature and strong narrative, *Overcast* shares traits with two Baroque characteristics: naturalism and psychology. "One can hardly speak of Baroque naturalism without taking notice of Baroque psychology. The preoccupation with the 'passions of the soul' is to be observed both in the artists and in the philosophers of the period" (Maritn13). Martin also states that "In attempting to define the essential characteristics of Baroque art we may conveniently begin with naturalism. Verisimilitude, though it takes many forms, is a principle to which all Baroque artists adhere" (Martin 12).

If drawing is a transfer of energy, then I have been able to inject emotions into all of my drawings. Even though I started out creating character studies, I eventually became enthralled with drawing the human figure. I was unaware in the beginning of my academic career that I had already had subconsciously chosen myself as the vehicle in which to express my emotions. It just took me longer to gain enough confidence to make it a reality.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

When I began my studies in the graduate program at ETSU, I initially thought I would expand my knowledge of portraiture. However, as I grew as an artist I began to realize that my passion for gesture drawing lent my style to more figurative work. Following this task through was a difficult challenge but what I have gained from my experience at ETSU is invaluable. For me, drawing is therapeutic. Due to my introversion, I often cannot express verbally what I need to say. Drawing lets me vent my frustrations, my anxieties, and my worries. When I draw, I feel like myself.

The past two years have been extremely difficult. Needless to say, for one reason or another, I have not been able to do the one thing that I think defines who I am. With the knowledge gained from writing this supporting paper, I am now more comfortable with how I view myself as an artist. And with this knowledge, I plan to move on, and develop new drawings that will speak for me.

> To make art is to sing with the human voice. To do this you must first learn that the only voice you need is the voice you already have. Art work is ordinary work, but it takes courage to embrace that work, and wisdom to mediate the interplay of art & fear. Sometimes to see your work's rightful place you have to walk to the edge of the precipice and search the deep chasms. You have to see that the universe is not formless and dark throughout, but awaits simply the revealing light of your own mind. Your art does not arrive miraculously from the darkness, but is made uneventfully in the light (Bayles and Orland 117).

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