

# *Rebecca Driffield*

## artist portfolio



Born in Melbourne, Australia, *Rebecca Driffield* has lived and worked in Paris since 1986.

She was awarded a grant to travel to Paris in 1986 from the Australia Council and received another generous grant the following year which enabled her to settle in Paris and paint full-time. In 1988, she received a *Special Mention* at the Salon de la Jeune Peinture at the Grand Palais in Paris, and in which her work was selected for a solo exhibition within the Salon. This exhibition opened the doors to visibility and further exhibiting opportunities in France and elsewhere in Europe.

In 1999, she received the *2nd Prize* for the *BP Portrait Award* at the National Portrait Gallery in London. In 2004, she participated with 11 other artists in the BBC TV programme, *Star Portraits*.

*Rebecca Driffield* has exhibited in various contemporary art fairs: ArtLondon (2007), ArtAthina (Athens, from 2007 to 2010), MacParis.

In 2019, her portrait of the biographer Claire Tomalin was acquired by the National Portrait Gallery in London and is now part of the permanent collection. The portrait is on view to the general public, and can be found in room 33 in the NPG.

*Rebecca Driffield's* work is in the permanent collections of the National Portrait Gallery, the Tavistock Institute in London, the BBC, and the Institute of Psychoanalysis in London, as well as in numerous private collections in France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Australia, the United States, Cambodia and the United Kingdom.

I am a figurative painter, and predominantly interested in portraying the human face in all its diversity and depth of feeling. In view of this preoccupation, the eyes of a human face are the starting point for each work which I try to bring to life, and imbue with vitality and sentiment. I begin by making a preliminary sketch in charcoal on the linen, and traces of the drawing often remain visible in the completed work. My quest is not to create a resemblance but rather about capturing a feeling or psychological state, and expressing that as authentically as I can. This exploration of the diversity of emotion and the human condition expressed through the human regard I never tire of and is at the heart of all my paintings.

I only ever paint with oil paint and linseed oil and believe this medium has the remarkable quality of being a vehicle for conveying emotion and the Mysteries. The people in my pictures are not depicted in a realistic setting but more like in a theatre of visual metaphors, full of odd juxtapositions where mysterious connec-

tions emerge between various characters, especially in my larger paintings where narrations are suggested yet not explained. Frequently, the main protagonist is looking directly at the viewer, beyond the frame of the painting, which begs the question: who is looking at whom and what is being communicated?

I hope that when regarding my paintings, the viewer feels intrigued, challenged and stimulated to put the pieces together to make a personal interpretation. For me, nothing is fixed in terms of specific symbols, and what the painting makes someone feel is as valid to me as my intended 'message'. I aim to create a work which can have a meaning, or many nuanced meanings imbedded in its painted image.

In conclusion, I have always been fascinated by what we understand by looking, and more specifically, by what we interpret and understand in the human regard. I'm forever driven by a desire to express this through drawing and painting, and each work is a fresh exploration.

*Rebecca Driffield*





2023 Inauguration exhibition for the reopening of the National Portrait Gallery London. Portrait of Claire Tomalin – on permanent display to the public in Room 33

Solo exhibition, Zookeeper, Paris

2019 Acquisition of portrait of Claire Tomalin by The National Portrait Gallery of London for the permanent collection

Group exhibition, BLUE CHIP XXI: The Collector's Exhibition, Niagara Galleries, Melbourne (Australia)

2013 Solo exhibition, Galerie Pierce, Paris (France)

2010 ARTATHINA, Thanassis Frissiras Gallery, Athens (Greece)

2007 ARTLONDON, Galerie Pierce, Paris (France)

2005 Solo exhibition at Thanassis Frissiras Gallery, Athens (Greece)

2003 Selected as 1 of 11 artists to paint for 1 of 4 programmes in the BBC Star Portraits series, broadcast in the UK, Australia and the USA

2001 Solo exhibition at the Centre culturel Le Présidial, Quimperlé (France)

1999 2nd Prize in the BP Portrait Award at the National Portrait Gallery, London (UK)

1993 Personal exhibition Jazz Men for the inauguration of the Hot Brass Jazz club, La Villette, Paris (France)

1988 Special Mention and Solo exhibition at the Salon de la Jeune Peinture at the Grand Palais, Paris (France)

1986 Awarded 4 Australia Council grants (1984-87) and emigrated to Paris

1983 Solo exhibition Large Collages on Paper, Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne (Australia)



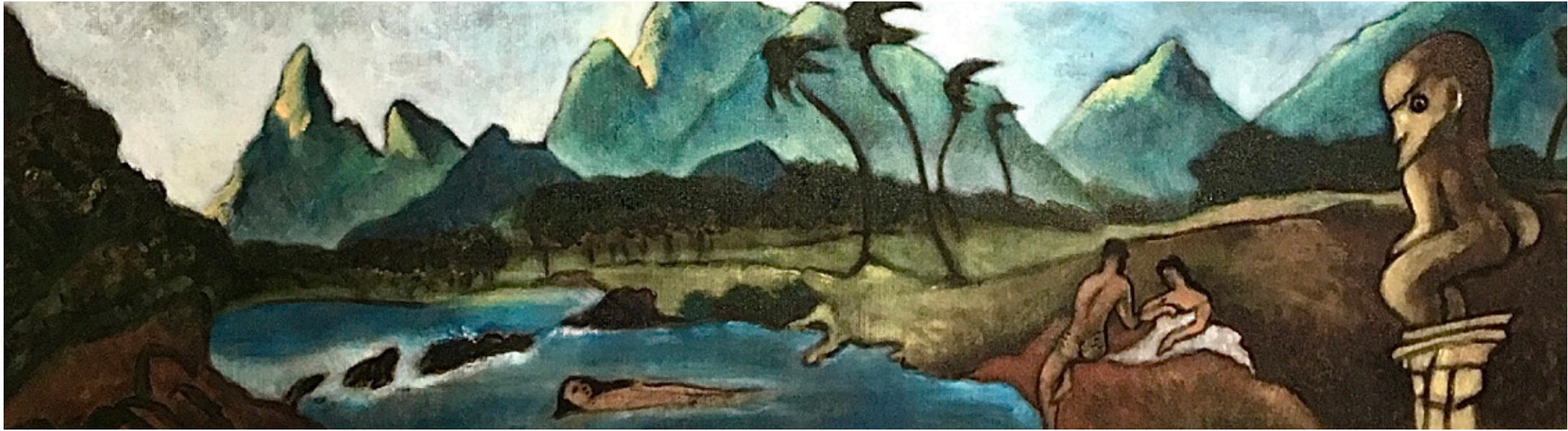
selected works the world we live in



*Come forth into the Light, let Nature be  
your teacher*

2020  
110 x 110 cm  
oil paint on linen





This painting was conceived and created during the Covid pandemic, between March and April 2020. It evokes the transition, and the emergence from darkness into the light. The landscape at the bottom, like a kind of predella, is derived from the idealised landscapes of *William Hodges*, the 18th Century English painter who travelled with Captain Cook on his travels in the Southern Hemisphere.

At the time of the lockdowns, when we were deprived of the things that usually fill our urban lives, and we were riddled with uncertainties about the future, Nature appeared by contrast as a haven of great sustenance and consolation. The title of this painting is a quotation taken from a poem by the English Romantic poet, *William Wordsworth*.





*Always watching*  
(diptych)

2021  
oil paint on linen  
150 x 200 cm



I have been increasingly interested in exploring and expressing my response to the times in which we live, and in this painting, about the surveillance that now permeates our lives, and which informs our behaviour. I wanted to create a pictorial space in which realistic elements are intertwined with pastiche to illustrate the different ways of being watched: from behind town windows by silent witnesses; from security cameras at building entrances; or constantly by the camera on our mobile phones. At the centre of the composition, a brutish figure fixes us with a defiant stare. Confrontational, ready to wield his stick, he is the executor of totalitarian, Big Brother-like systems of control. It is fascinating to me how the context of an era influences imagery and artistic enquiry: George Orwell's prescient vision of the future in his book, *1984*, published in 1949, is now taken to an even more extreme stage enabled by the leaps and bounds of technology in the 21st Century.







*We arrived here yesterday*

2018  
105 x 105 cm  
oil paint on linen





The idea behind this work is the belief that human history cyclically repeats the same patterns but with ever evolving technologies. The devastation of environments leading to the displacement of individuals and communities in the past are responsible for where the world stands

now. These recurring challenges force us to constantly question our identity and trajectory in order to survive and adapt. The face staring at a screen at the top righthand side of the painting represents the smartphone as the eye through which we see the world more and more.





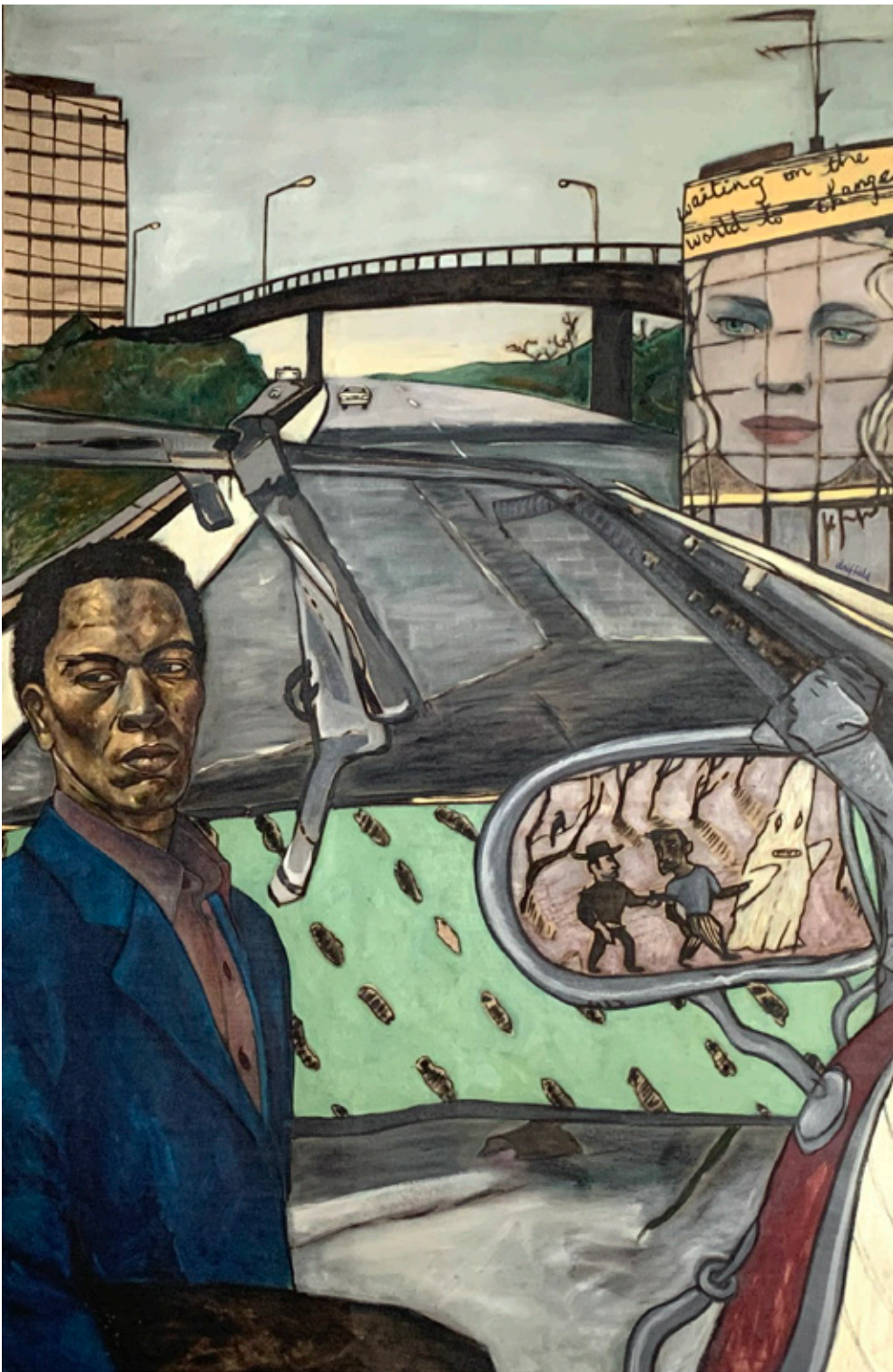
*What do they see?*

2017  
126 x 124 cm  
oil paint on linen



Rebecca Driffield\*

the world we live in



*Waiting on the world to change*

2010  
195 x 130 cm  
oil paint on linen





*Tyger playing the Blues... just for me*

2010  
110 x 115 cm  
oil paint on linen





*Windows on the world*

2008  
150 x 150 cm  
oil paint on linen





*Going, gone*

2010  
130 x 195 cm  
oil paint on linen

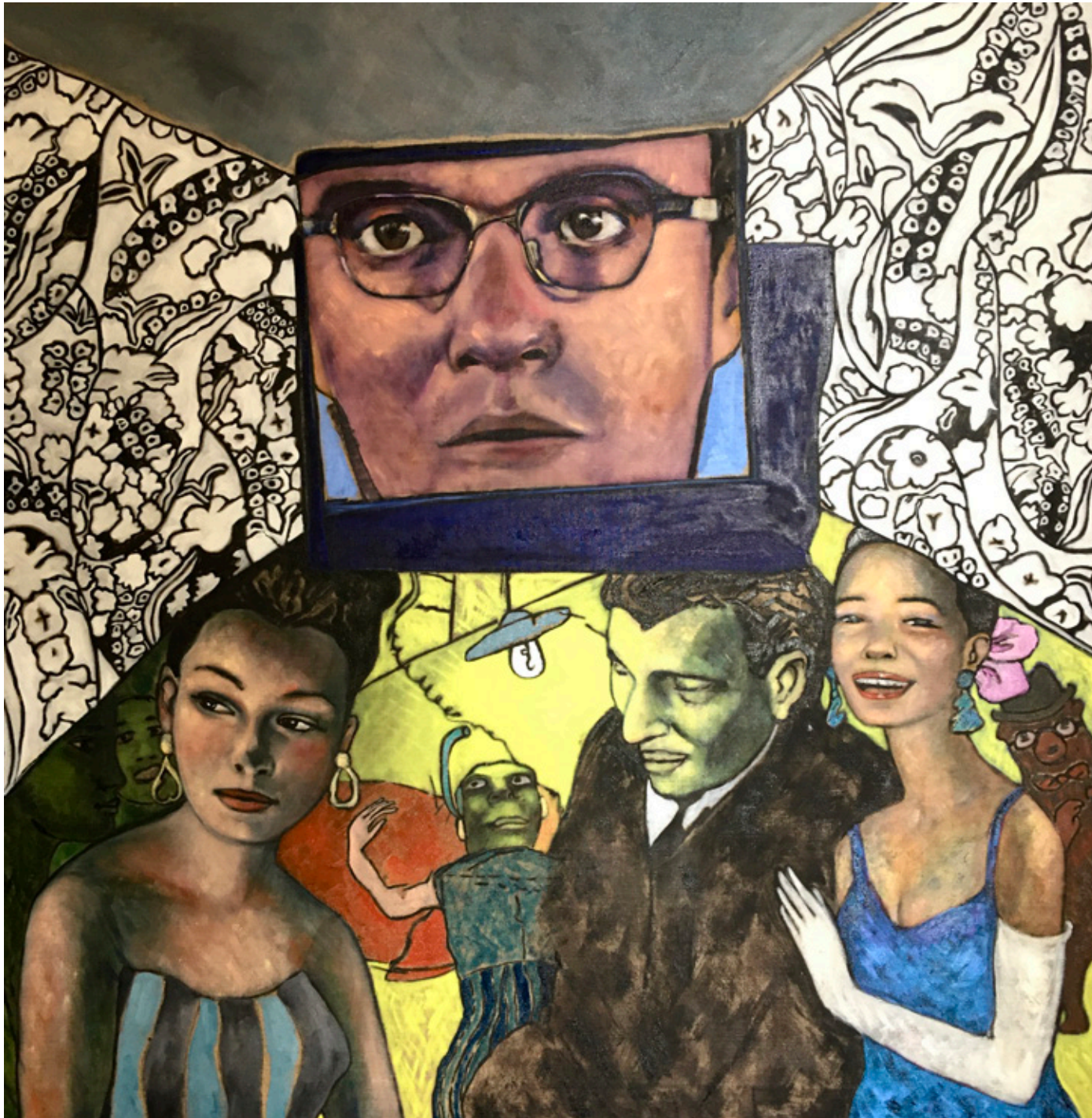




Never let me go, *sung at the Blue Room*

2010  
130 x 195 cm  
oil paint on linen





*Party Animals*

2022  
120 x 120 cm  
oil paint on linen



selected works faces and quotations



As the human regard is central to my work, I usually begin the preliminary charcoal sketch with the eyes of a face, and in this case, with the figure on the right-hand side of the painting. I research from myriad visual sources: books, the internet, photos, and look for faces which I find compelling and which can act as a starting point for a drawing, but without an attempt to create a resemblance. I try to evoke emotional expression as authentically as possible and build up a composition and narrative inspired by that.

In this particular work I began with the blue gaze of the figure on the right-hand side who engages directly with the viewer. The work is about looking and the quotation from Rilke fitted very well with the idea of contemplation. I love the complementarity between visual expression and the written word, and often an apt quotation finds its way to the surface of my mind which I incorporate into the picture.

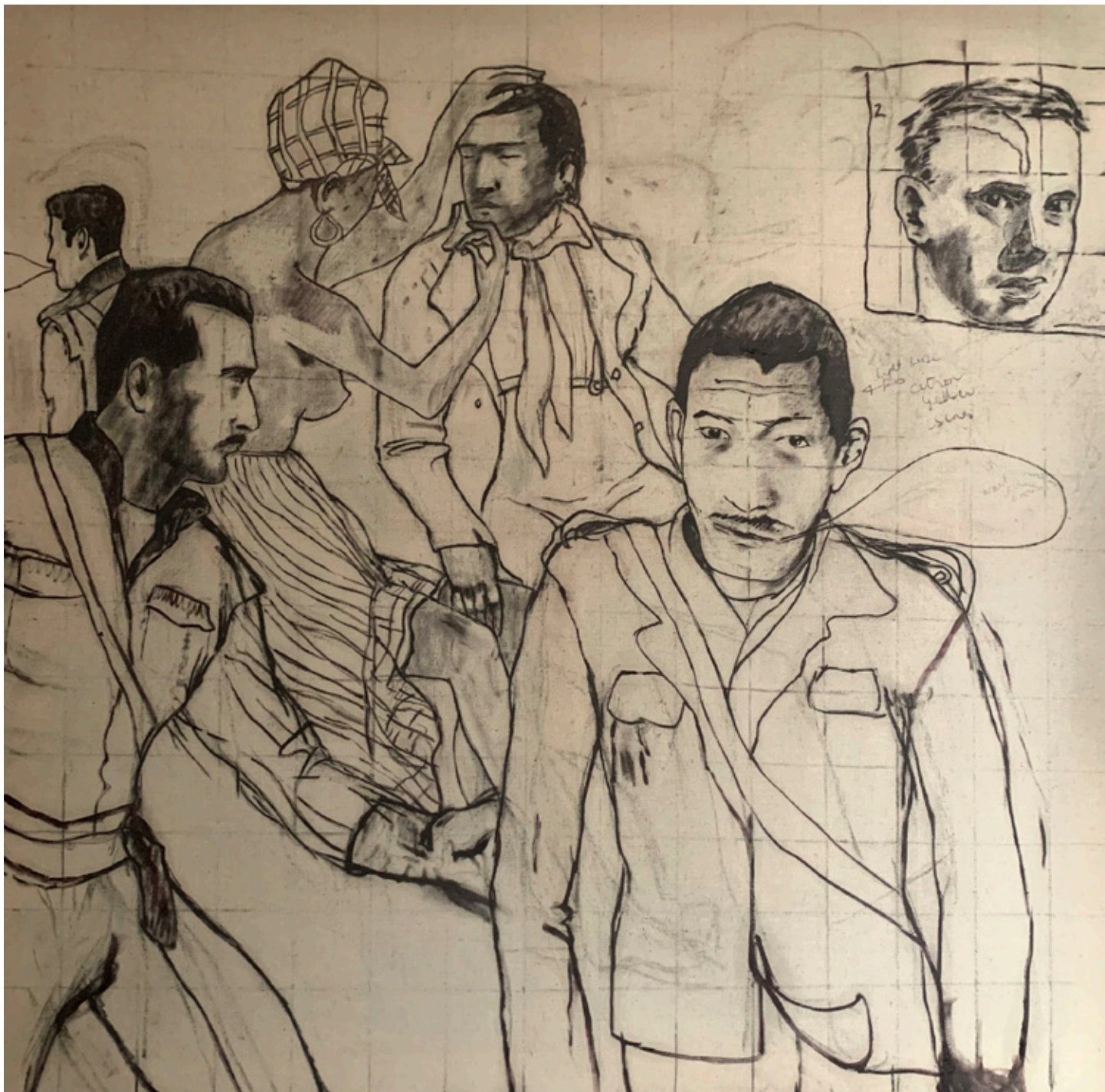




*The world that is looked at so deeply  
wants to flourish in love*

2024  
97 x 130 cm  
oil paint on linen





My process for preparing a painting remains forever the same and by now after, so many years, is almost ritualistic.

The very first step is browsing the art suppliers and choosing a stretcher size for the work I have in mind; the possibilities feel creatively stimulating and rather similar to finding the right stage for a play! Once I have the stretcher in my studio, I stretch it up with a Belgian linen, using tacks rather than staples; finally I apply heated animal skin glue with a large brush to the linen which tightens and protects it. The result is an almost crafted support which has a taut, gritty surface.

I draw directly onto the prepared linen in charcoal and this drawing process is the underpinning of all my paintings. I have a great love of drawing and believe that it remains present when the painting is developed : some parts remain more graphic and others more painterly and I like this contrasted effect.

In this work, I used a pastiche of imagery and photos drawn from books and magazines which I then amalgamated into a visual idea about appropriating and being appropriated.





*Appropriations*

2022  
150 x 150 cm  
oil paint on linen





*Between the Emotion and the Response*  
(diptych)

2019  
100 x 216 cm  
oil paint on linen

The title of this work is taken from  
the poem, "The Hollow Men"  
by T.S.Eliot (1925)





*In a dark wood, Alexei Navalny*

2019  
100 x 100 cm  
oil paint on linen

Portrait of Alexei Navalny, and the title is inspired by "The Divine Comedy: Hell" by Dante





*Running from Burden*  
(diptych)

2023  
150 x 200 cm  
oil paint on linen





In this image one can see the transition process from the charcoal drawing to the development of the painting. The drawing has been fixed with paint and I have begun to work the background in oil paint and linseed oil; for the sky my inspiration was El Greco's turbulent and moody brushwork. For the woman's dress I wanted to keep the drawing very present and simply used a thin wash of oil pigment rubbed over the drawing.

This painting "Running from Burden" can be read in many ways: the female figure is struggling against burden and the male figure can be seen as either hindering or supporting her. With great determination and will, she is attempting to free herself from constriction, whatever that restriction might be. Is she defeated or victorious? The interpretation is open to how the viewer wishes to see it.





*Big Bad Wolf*

1999  
120 x 120 cm  
oil paint on linen





*Through the eyes of the Poet*

2009  
150 x 150 cm  
oil paint on linen

In this painting, the reclining woman, as well as the viewer, are the objects of the gaze of the poet Charles Baudelaire whose portrait appears in the upper left-hand corner of the picture.





*Approaching Storm*

2018  
80 x 100 cm  
oil paint on linen





*In the arms of Morpheus*

2023  
150 x 150 cm  
oil paint on linen





*The Three Graces*

2013  
105 x 115 cm  
oil paint on linen



selected works portrait commissions





A commissioned portrait is a specific artistic challenge. It begins by my being approached with the request for a portrait of somebody significant or important; the mission is charged with expectation and often emotion, and requires “capturing” a true likeness and an inner presence.

Meeting with the subject, making sketches and taking photos is the initial step in the process. Back in the studio I absorb all my gathered material and also depend on an imprint the subject has made on my mind’s eye. As with all my painting, I begin by sketching directly onto the linen in charcoal working until I have achieved a recognisable regard and resemblance. This part of the work process is highly concentrated and analytical. Once the drawing is strong I transition to painting.

Often the backgrounds of my portraits express elements pertinent to the subject and which I feel add another a layer of interest to the portrait.

I always try to convey the sense and psychology of the personality and do this specifically through the regard.

*La Désespérée*  
(inspired by Gustav Courbet)

2019  
80 x 65 cm  
oil paint on linen





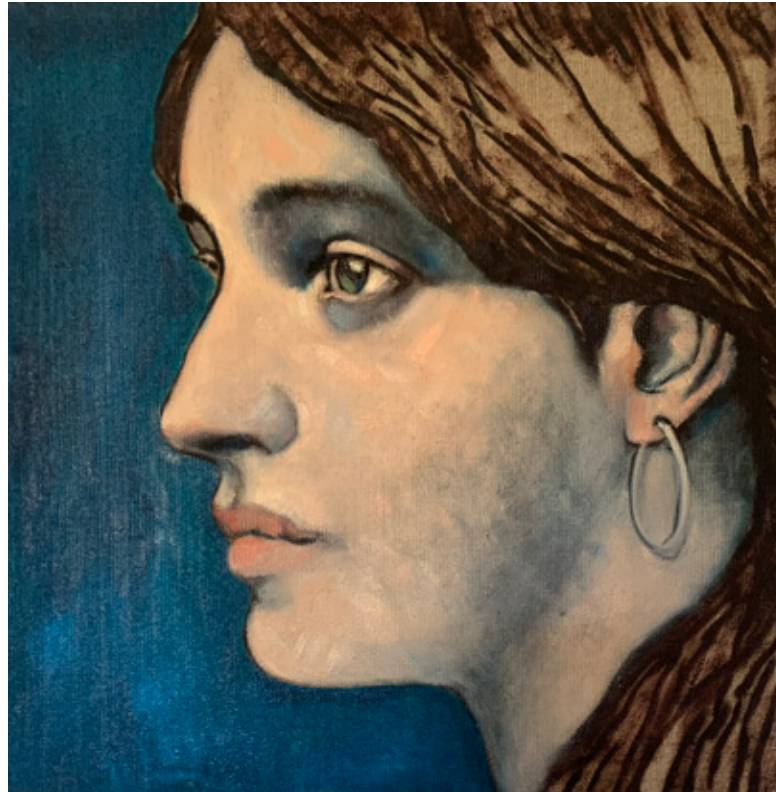
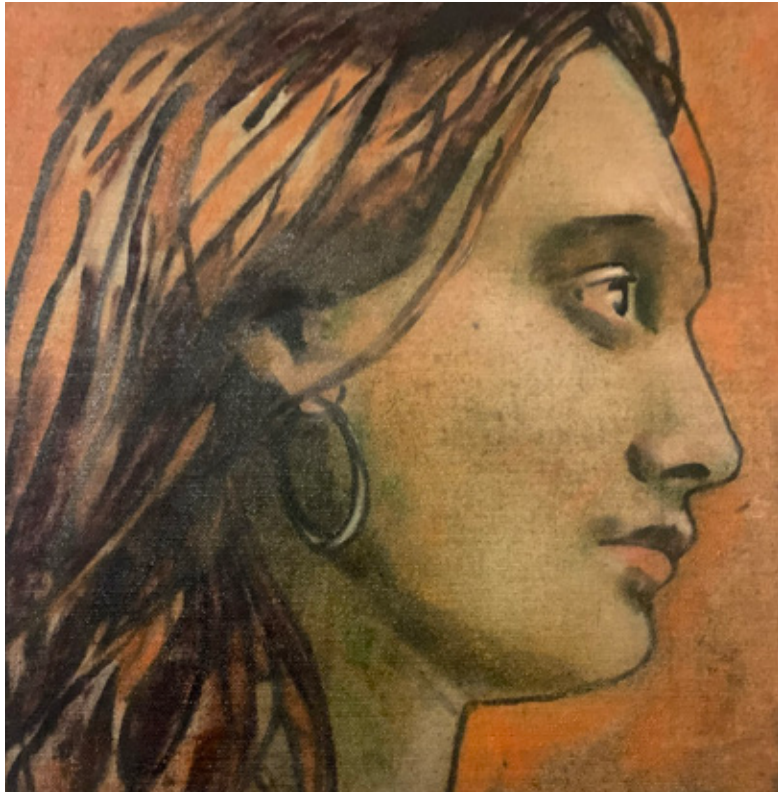
*Boyish Boo*  
(commissioned portrait)

1999  
117 x 75 cm  
oil paint on linen

Awarded 2nd Prize / BP Portrait Award:  
The National Portrait Gallery of London

Collection of Frissiras Museum, Athens





*Rêverie* (right)

2024  
40 x 40 cm  
oil paint on linen

*Looking* (left)

2024  
40 x 40 cm  
oil paint on linen





*Portrait of Claire Tomalin*

2018  
150 x 50 cm  
oil paint on linen

Collection of  
National Portrait Gallery of London





*Babette*

2018  
50 x 70 cm  
oil paint on linen



references and press



*Short monograph*  
(transl. from French)

Rebecca Driffield appeared one day on my path like a Patrick Modiano novel. Just like in his writing, not all the keys are to be handed over; suffice to say that it was through a photo and video artist, Philipp Lachenmann. It is no doubt not so strange, after all, as the means of recording reality – what we call reality – join the art of painters when their interest is in faces, identity or the non-identity of beings, their plurality and their diversity. Driffield's portrait of the biographer Claire Tomalin, which she painted in 2018, had not yet entered the collections of the National Portrait Gallery in London. It was not yet painted. I only knew works of the imagination, or what seemed so to me – but, just like the writer who agreed to pose for her, Rebecca Driffield loves real beings as much as the subjects of their writings, their characters. The profusion of the Dickensian universe, dear to Claire Tomalin, also suits Rebecca. In her paintings, figures are rarely people that we should identify - even if their features belong to a repertoire of shapes, faces encountered one day, somewhere between the multiple places of existence of their creator, cosmopolitan cities a hundred times recrossed since she left Melbourne. Rebecca Driffield lives in Paris, like Modiano. Their city is a witness to possible stories, glimpsed, of which we know neither the beginning nor what may follow. I see – was this the first painting I

ever saw? – these young people in a car, a black man at the wheel (I am writing from memory, preferring to see memories resurface rather than looking for their model ; the image is recognizable, the description of the actual painting can be delayed), a woman standing upright, against the window, in a bra. We imagine humid heat like in New York, the smell of fried food and air conditioners, or that, even denser, of asphalt. Does the woman want to show herself like this – pose – or does the eye which captures her – like in a candid snapshot – simply retain a instant placed between two moments which do not appear in the composition? The photogram remains, but it is painted, like a segment of a predella when the other scenes of the story are missing. The car is in motion and the eye that sees as well as the hand that paints will record only this brief encounter – one like those the surrealists loved above all else.

Rebecca Driffield maintains an intimate relationship with photography, with the photographic – it is the register of the father, the grandfather – loss of memory on the part of the author, but not of filiation for the painter<sup>1</sup>. He photographed the ancient inhabitants of Australia – should we say Aborigines? Words are now lost, but faces remain, captured by a photographer friend – a “Red” as Rebecca likes to say, and I also recognize myself in this connection<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> In reality, these photographs do not come from Driffield's grandfather, but from his brother on the maternal line – her great-uncle, Frederick Simonon Driffield. He is also not the author of the photographs, taken in the 1880s, but the latter's friend, a certain Foelshe, police inspector and amateur photographer. This man was part of the so-called re-education missions carried out in the tribes of South Australia; he photographed all those who were thus “chosen” within the framework of this program. The photographs remained in the library of Rebecca Driffield's family, to whom her parents transmitted a completely different outlook towards these men and women whom she had looked at with passion since childhood.

<sup>2</sup> The Reds, in Driffield's family, arrive later – and the photographer himself is a police officer, but I believe that the young girl looking at these images could merge photographer and owner of these images in one single entity, positive and no longer repressive – albeit without the memory of their origin ever being lost.



Driffield herself does not record reality, but provokes it, seizes a situation and turns it around, makes it a surreality in which we never feel foreign – us, here or elsewhere, from Paris, London or Melbourne; but also all those she sees and paints. New Objectivity is not far away when we look at her portrait of Claire Tomalin, for example ; but it is only one element of a profuse lineage, in which many others have distinguished themselves, namely Stanley Spencer – cinema also has its place, as does the development of photography.

And so all these faces, these painted faces whose presence Driffield seeks, whose precision is immediately contradicted by the indeterminacy of the attitudes, between changing states of being, perhaps these faces, like that of the young woman in the car, are there precisely to “knock on the window”. I think of *Always Watching* (diptych), from 2021. The painting is, for its author, an evocation of 1984 by George Orwell. We may think of Kafka too, specifically Orson Welles’ version – a modernized Trial in an America torn up by class and colour violence.

“I wanted to create,” Driffield tells us, “a pictorial space within which realistic and parodic elements merge, in order to illustrate the different ways of being looked at: from the windows of cities by silent witnesses, by the cameras of surveillance at the entrance to buildings, or even, constantly, through the lens of our cell phones. In the center of the composition, a brutal-looking character stares at us with his defiant gaze. Seeking confrontation, ready to wield the wand, he is the enforcer of totalitarian control systems similar to Big Brother.”

The ever possible escape lies in painting. “Anything is possible” is pictorial. My memory had merged two paintings into one: *Going, Gone* and *Windows on the World* – a collage of sorts, as practiced by Driffield. The young woman in the car (in *Going, Gone*) was less undressed than I remembered (it was the one from *Windows on the World*), but much more frontal – it is she who observes us, as children sometimes do, while the couple (called mixed or interracial where this vocabulary is used) does not seem concerned about the outside. The composition of the

two works brings them together, leading to a necessary, salutary confusion, as if we could move easily from one to the other. Both express a certain joy – mixed of course, because what kind of joy is not mixed with its opposite... Hence perhaps also the element of collage, of assemblage, in the paintings themselves – except the portraits which would present themselves as such: any contradiction must be seen and read at first glance, whether it is attraction, repulsion, surveillance, confrontation... What remains are the collages themselves, in lighter, more vivid colours, like a breath. Asphyxiation lurks in Rebecca Driffield’s paintings. The latent anguish that emerges is not only the opposite of joy, it is an inhalation, a breath that rises from the depths of oneself and pushes back against oppression, in both meanings of the word.

*François Pierre Michaud*

Curator at the Fondation Louis Vuitton,  
Paris and formerly Curator at the  
Museum of Modern Art of Paris



*Reference*

I have followed Rebecca's work with great interest for many years. I made my first acquisitions – etchings – in the 1990s and I have continued to collect her work – both paintings and commissioned portraits.

Rebecca's portraiture is of particular interest to me. She casts the human form within images rich in ideas, deepened by her use of allegory, myth and metaphor. Her paintings exceed any narrow definition of the portrait. What I love in her art is how she pictorialises - in powerful and haunting ways - the alienation of contemporary urban life. She has an ability to capture the introspection of her subjects on canvases, often of large dimensions, which offer brilliant, complex and colourful fusions of the figurative and the narrative, of image and text, of resemblance and imagination. As a painter, she

has an ability to redefine what has long been a central tenet of artistic practice and this is one of the reasons why her portraits have captured the imagination of curators and have been selected to hang in prestigious national collections.

Portraiture is just one aspect of her oeuvre, however. Rebecca has demonstrated a sustained interest in the graphic arts, from the early experiments in print-making to more recent drawings and collages. The works on paper demonstrate again how the human form is the starting point for experiments with line, tone, texture and narrative. Rebecca's graphic art diversifies her art and in highlighting her ability to innovate, to harness her unique style to new formal languages, it demonstrates how she can translate her personal vision into different media.

Rebecca's art is complex and hybrid. Her paintings prints and drawings are at turns ambitious, satirical, comic and tragic. For me, the complexities of her art result from her personal identity as an Australian painter who has long been deeply rooted in French cultural life. Her art synthesises these transcultural experiences, mixing her twin fascinations – with the old world heritage of Europe and the vibrant, dynamic of global cultures, notably African, Aboriginal and non-white.

*Dr Kate Grandjouan*

Lecturer in Art History,  
Courtauld Institute of Art, London  
Lecturer in History of Art,  
University of Cambridge





Rebecca Driffield was awarded 2nd Prize for the annual BP Portrait Award at the National Portrait Gallery, London in 1999. Her portrait “Boyish Boo” was also chosen as the publicity image for advertising the Award exhibition in London (*top right*: in the London Underground) as well as the image on the banners in front of the NPG. The exhibition was open to the public for 2 months over the summer in 1999.

## The Daily Telegraph

“

*But I must admit that several other contenders impressed me more - among them the second-prizewinner, Boyish Boo by Rebecca Driffield. This is painted, as were the paintings by the ancient Greeks, using essentially just red, black and white...*

”

Martin Gayford

Excerpt from the review written by Martin Gayford for the 1999 BP Portrait Award in the article “Freudian Tendency” (*see next page*)

The Inauguration of the Re-opening of the National Portrait Gallery, London in June 2023, after 3 years of rebuilding and renovation. Driffield’s portrait of Claire Tomalin, acquired for the collection in 2019, is now on permanent display in Room 33.







**REBECCA DRIFFIELD**  
From Small Kitchens, Large Paintings

When Rebecca Driffield was living in spacious quarters in her native Melbourne, she was doing etchings and small paintings. After coming to Paris in 1986, she took a small apartment and began to paint very large oils. Fortunately for her, she's not easily inconvenienced. "I had the linen pinned up on the wall in the kitchen," Driffield, 37, recalls. "I was doing acrobatics, standing in the sink, craning out the window to get some perspective on what I was doing. Finally I found the solution: I turned a pair of old opera glasses the wrong way round."

Even now, three years since she first rode into town on a grant from the Australian Ministry of the Arts, Driffield works in a breakfast nook in her apartment in the 12th arrondissement. But she has dispensed with the opera glasses; she just goes into the next room for a longer view. "I'm very adaptable. As long as I have a space — any space — I work."

"My first year here I thought, 'My God, I don't know how I'm going to break in.' It's tough when you're unknown and don't have the references that mean anything in Paris. You have to let your work speak for you."

And it has. Driffield's first showing in Paris was an opendoor exhibition of artists' studios in the 20th arrondissement, where she was working. Her paintings attracted attention, and she was invited to show at the Salon Jeune Peinture at the Grand Palais in 1987 and was invited back the next year. From there she was asked to exhibit in Italy, and to put up a solo show at the Australian Embassy in Paris in January of this year. She sold three paintings and got an invitation to show at the 21st International Festival of Painting at Cognac-sur-Mer (through Sept. 30).

Also this month, Driffield is participating in *Artistes Australiens en Marge du Bicentenaire de la Revolution Francaise* at the Australian Embassy. Seven artists have contributed one work each on this year's big theme, as well as a few other paintings not related to the French Revolution.

Driffield, along with the other artists in this group, will be exhibiting at the prestigious Venice Biennale next year. "I feel that things are starting to happen for me," she says with some understatement. "I would like to be represented by a Parisian gallery in the next couple of years. In any case, I feel at home here and I'm going to stay."

• *Artistes Australiens en Marge du Bicentenaire de la Revolution Francaise*: Australian Embassy, 4 Rue Jean Rey, 75015. Tel. 40.59.33.00. September 30. Hours: 9h-18h. Sat 14h-18h.  
• *21st International Festival of Painting*: Chateau Malesherbes de Cognac-sur-Mer, 7 Place Grenette, Hauts-de-Correncon, 63000. Tel. (01) 93.20.87.29. Through Sept. 30.

Text by Perry Leopold  
Photo by Richard Litt

left  
Interviewed and photographed for the Franco-American magazine *PARIS PASSION* in 1987. The magazine had a wide circulation in both France and the USA.

bottom right  
the painting "Spring and Autumn" was used as the book cover illustration for Russell Grigg's book, "Lacan, Language, and Philosophy" published by State University of New York Press, 2008







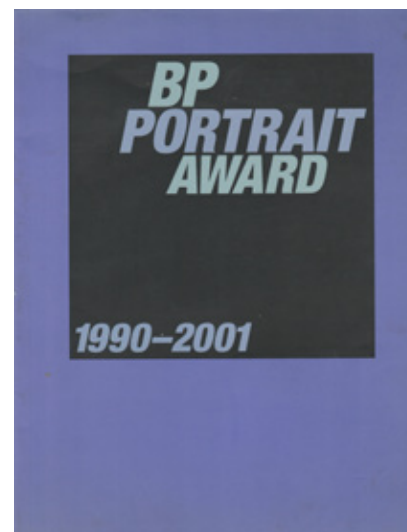
Her portrait of Amy Winehouse was exhibited at the stand for the Thanassis Frissiras Gallery at the Art Fair ArtAthina, Athens, 2010. The entire stand was devoted to Driffield's series of paintings on Jazz.



Les Cahiers de la Peinture

“If I had to name the masterpiece of the exhibition at this 41st Art Salon of Young Painting at the Grand Palais in Paris, I would take the risk of naming the painting by the Australian artist, Rebecca Driffield, who has introduced a surface of emotions which is hard to explain: the image is disconcerting and seems to illustrate an auction with the assistants spreading out a large portrait, sombre and with the aspect of a medical diagram. Several hands can be seen holding books or more probably, catalogues for the auction; in the foreground, a man is leaving the room, a child held against him, its eyes wide open. Tens of extraordinary enclaves, the brushwork conveying the meaning as it should be painted, while the enigma remains forever present. One is convinced and moved emotionally without being able to say exactly from where the signs of persuasion come.”

Raymond Perrot







German Expressionist Prints

This exhibition features many of the greats of German Expressionism 1913-1923. See photographs by the brilliant satirist George Grosz, dry points from the keen eye of social observer Max Beckmann, etchings and chalk lithographs by champion downtrodden Kathe Kollwitz (Self-portrait, above), woodcuts by Max Pechstein early work by the lyrical Emil Nolde. exhibition is a celebration of the verve of the print medium, and a study of when art was a potent social comm. Rex Irwin Art Dealer, 1st Floor, 38 Street, Woolahra. Until July 12. Ad free. Phone: 9363 3212.



Rebecca Driffield – The Eye of the Mind

It seems that nobody ever told Rebecca Driffield that it's rude to stare. The Australian-born, Paris-based artist is obsessed with faces. She has been a finalist in the prestigious BP Portrait Prize at the National Portrait Gallery, London, and featured in the BBC television Star Portraits program. Her new exhibition includes 15 works (Cowboy Sax, above), which must have required a lot of intense gazing. Driffield treats each face as another foreign territory to pause at, wander across, and delve into. Her subjects are real and imaginary: models, their catkins, and backgrounds a patchwork of symbols, visual puns and personal associations. Charles Hewitt Gallery, 335 South Dowling Street, Darlinghurst. July 17-August 5. Admission: free. Phone: 9331 4988.

THE TIMES WEDNESDAY JUNE 23 1999 46

Top prize won by artist who taught himself

By DAVID ALDERIDGE, ARTS CORRESPONDENT

A SELF-TAUGHT artist who took up painting after abandoning a successful career as a fashion designer won a leading art prize yesterday.

Clive Smith, 32, whose employment as a designer included the international clothes chain Gap, won the £10,000 BP Portrait Award for Double Single, depicting a young man reclining alone on a double bed.

Observed in meticulous detail, and with a raw honesty reminiscent of Lucian Freud, the composition captures the intricate textures of materials and skin tones. The judges said they were particularly struck by the composition and Smith's use of light.

After studying fashion design at Kingston Polytechnic between 1985 and 1988, Smith worked in New York, Paris and Naples for various fashion companies.

In 1996, disillusioned with the fashion world – and realising that he had little interest in clothes after all – he decided to break away.

Smith, whose father was a product engineer and whose mother taught dance, used his savings to support himself for three years, training himself to paint by paying for his own models, including the one in the winning portrait, and taking drawing classes.

Unusually for an artist winning such recognition, he has no art school qualifications. "I



Runners-up top. Double Single by Rebecca Driffield; and Andrew Tiff's Tony Benn

took to figurative painting that there are very few good people teaching. There are no few who can do the work themselves. Because I'm older, I know how I wanted to paint."

After from receiving his big break when a dealer in Man-

chester decided to represent him, he won third prize in the BP Portrait Awards last year.

This year the BP award's second prize, of £5,000, went to the Australian painter Rebecca Driffield, 30, who lives in Paris, for Double Single, a portrait of her husband.

The third prize, of £3,000, was awarded to Andrew Tiff for his portrait of Tony Benn, a commission from the House of Commons. Mr Benn was so impressed that he told the National Portrait Gallery that he preferred it to the one by Humphrey Ocean in the gallery's collection.

Tiff, 30, studied art at Birmingham Polytechnic and at university in London; he now lives in Iceland. This is the fifth time he has submitted work for the BP Portrait Award. His work was commended and won the BP Travel Award in 1996.

He said: "My imagery is predominantly figurative with a realistic approach, though I sometimes take a more experimental stance which questions the importance of likeness and resemblance. ... My work cannot be described exclusively as portraiture as there is often a strong narrative content to my pictures, when I use symbolism or allegory."

This year's BP Travel Award was won by Jennifer McCrue, whose training included City School of Art in Aberdeen, for an "enterprising



Clive Smith's Double Single

project" that involved studying methods of teaching portraiture in Brunel's Charles Saumarez Smith, director of the National Portrait Gallery, chaired the jury, which had to look at more than 700 paintings. The works were submitted for judging anonymously. "Nobody should mean it's done completely fair-

ART LONDON  
Beyond the Royal Academy  
Intelligent PR  
PRESS RELEASE

ART LONDON – THE UK'S MOST STYLISH FAIR FOR CONTEMPORARY AND MODERN ART

Art London, the UK's most stylish fair for contemporary and modern art, returned for its 9th year and welcomed 15,000 visitors over five days. The venue was once again a 65,000 square foot marquee set in the beautiful grounds of The Royal Hospital, Chelsea, London SW3, where Art London ran from Thursday 4th October to Monday 8th October 2007.



Piet Mondrian (1872-1944): White Lines c. 1900, Froot & Reed



S.J. Peploe (1871-1935): The Beach at Morning, The Court Gallery



Dylan Lewis, Cheating Sitting In Tree - Life Size, Everard Read Gallery

The fair attracted high-profile visitors including David Cameron MP, George Osborne MP, Sir Menzies Campbell MP, musicians Robert Plant and Bob Geldof, actress Dame Diana Rigg, comedian Rory Bremner, entrepreneur Bobby Hashemi and cricketer Matthew Fleming.

- Froot & Reed were showcasing both twentieth century and contemporary works. The gallery sold a major work by Piet Mondrian and two pieces by Ben Nicholson, all to new clients.
- The Court Gallery exhibited at Art London for the first time, and sold a number of works to new clients by artists including Samuel John Peploe (£48,000), Louis Valtat (£28,000) and Vanessa Bell (£22,000). The gallery also sold works by Toot Kelder, James Bulwar Mason and Stella Meyers.
- The Iron Heritage Foundation, one of the charities involved in this year's fair, sold over 75 works by contemporary Iranian artists. The show, entitled "Broken Promises, Forbidden Dreams", included works by Farhad Mashini and Mustafa Dehshiri who were also featured in an auction house sale at the end of October.
- South Africa based Everard Read exhibited at Art London for the eighth time, showcasing works by artists including sculptor Dylan Lewis, whose work Cheating Sitting in Tree - Life Size sold for £60,000.
- Galerie Peire sold a Rebecca Driffield painting to Standard Chartered PLC for their corporate art collection. The work will circulate amongst the bank branches, notably South East Asia, before ending up in the new headquarters in the UK.
- MacLean Fine Art had an extremely successful fair, selling over £40,000 worth of works at the preview night alone and a six figure sum in total.
- The Portland Gallery sold both modern and contemporary British works for a total figure in excess of £105,000, one of which a large watercolour by Alexander Cresswell for £38,000.

30 ART

A glimpse beneath the skin

IN THE paintings of Rebecca Driffield, mythology moves through the lives of people rooted in reality or displaced in embryonic transformation.

On show at the Tavistock Centre, Belsize Lane, Hampstead, until June 5, her oils are figuratively decisive and homogenous; conceived, with people who might in essence be prosaic, yet are turning inward, to confront personal potential and the conflict of relationships. They exist in close proximity or are borne on the back of man-made fantasy.

"People are my preoccupation," she says. "My early work is cinematographic but more recently I've explored the metaphysical and symbolic with abstracted backgrounds. I love the decorative



People are scrutinised and vigorously portrayed by Rebecca Driffield in works including Willow Pattern (above) at the Tavistock Centre, Hampstead.

Egyptian and Greek art. I like linking different elements, sometimes, I hope with wit."

There are contemporary situations; a blonde urges a restless young man to stay. Against a

Willow Pattern, two men and two women barely communicate. The women are confident, the men fearful or wistfully existing elsewhere.

There are allusions to jazz; moments captured in sections. And, from everyday situations, the mind extends to the improbable. In The Beckoning of Myth three strange women move among displaced limbs like a

tion. And in the painting From the Soil of Caliban Springs Ariel, a creature, in vegetation green, grows a credible pair of wings.

Says Driffield, "I painted this after seeing the photo of a man's

surgery. He looked monstrous and this gave me the idea of Caliban which developed into something earthy. Ariel, in contrast, came from that. Now I'm interested in Japanese faces with de-

pression. He looked monstrous and this gave me the idea of Caliban which developed into something earthy. Ariel, in contrast, came from that. Now I'm interested in Japanese faces with de-

Rebecca Driffield présente des personnages surprenants  
Onirisme et psychologie au Présidial

Le Présidial pourrait son voyage dans le quotidien pour une nouvelle exposition de l'artiste australienne Rebecca Driffield. Une série de 9 tableaux sur toile qui n'a pas fini d'interpeller le public.

Après l'artiste Joe Reid, le Présidial accueille une exposition surprenante de l'Australienne Rebecca Driffield. Après plusieurs passages remarqués à Sydney, Tokyo, l'artiste a décidé cette fois de prêter ses visages à Quimper pour une exposition « État d'âme du lever au coucher du soleil » une série de 9 peintures sur toile de style figuratif, travaillées « comme une fresque », au process et au-tou-ain.

« J'aime beaucoup les symboles, exprimer les aspects intérieurs de l'être par la forme », explique Rebecca Driffield. Au premier abord, les toiles interprètent et donnent une impression de malaise. L'intensité du regard des personnages dépeints, dénote d'une présence humaine qui surgit.

Chaque toile est un véritable double portrait. Outre les visages qui donnent l'impression de suivre le spectateur, le fond pictural exprime l'âme profonde du personnage, le relief psychologique



Rebecca Driffield, entourée de Alain Pannetier et Sylvie Corrier, a inauguré vendredi son exposition au Présidial.

d'un état. « Mes toiles ont une dimension mystérieuse et énigmatique à la fois ». Une vision onirique et universelle des personnages pris au hasard.

« État d'âme du lever au coucher du soleil » de Rebecca Driffield au Présidial jusqu'au 12 février.



curriculum vitae



2023	Inauguration exhibition for the reopening of the National Portrait Gallery London. Portrait of Claire Tomalin – on permanent display to the public in Room 33		“Evasion#1” with Dépôt Art Gallery and Philippos Vazakas at Espace Christiane Peugeot, Paris
	Solo exhibition, Zookeeper, Paris, France		Presentation of two paintings for the ARTBOX.PROJECT (Switzerland) at the Armory Art Weeks, New York, USA
2019 - 2020	Portrait of Claire Tomalin acquired by The National Portrait Gallery of London for the permanent collection	2012	“Next Generation” Summer School Workshop; invited to give workshop / theme: the Olympic Games, at The National Portrait
	“Blue Chip XXI: The Collector’s Exhibition”, at Niagara Galleries, Melbourne, Australia		Gallery, London, U“Music in paintings”, Exhibition at Galerie Boissière+Gomendio, Neuilly-sur-Seine, France
2018	BP Portrait Award Exhibition; 49 portraits selected among 2667 candidates from 88 countries, including Rebecca Driffield’s Portrait of Claire Tomalin	2011	Gala Exhibition “Mystery postcards”, The National Portrait Gallery, London
	Exhibition on tour around Great Britain at the following museums: – The National Portrait Gallery, London (14 June - 23 September 2018) – Wolverhampton Art Gallery (13 October - 2 December 2018) – Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh (December 2018 - March 2019) – Winchester Discovery Centre (March - June 2019)		Solo Exhibition at Galerie Pierce, Paris, France
	Solo Exhibition at Zookeeper Paris, Rue Notre-Dame de Nazareth, Paris, France	2010	Exhibition at Galerie Marceau, Nantes, France
	“Face to face” Exhibition of BP Portrait Award Artists 2018 at CassArt Islington, London, UK		Solo Exhibition at the Thanassis Frissiras Gallery stand, ArtAthina, Athens, Greece
		2008	The Tallinn Winter Exhibition for the Children of Narva, Tamm Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia
			Exhibition at 22nd edition of the Grand Prix des Peintures, Saint- Grégoire, France
			Exhibition at the Thanassis Frissiras Gallery stand at ArtAthina, Athens



	Solo Exhibition of Paintings at the Charles Hewitt Gallery, Sydney, Australia		– Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead – New Art Gallery, Walsall
2007	Exhibition at Studio Véronique de Guitarre, Saint-Germain-des-prés, Paris, France Exhibition at the Galerie Pierce stand, ArtLondon/art fair, London, UK  “AIDES” exhibition, Galerie Yvon Lambert, Paris, France  Portia Geach Portrait Prize Exhibition at S.H.Ervin Gallery, Sydney, Australia (selected as finalist)  Exhibition at the Thanassis Frissiras Gallery stand, ArtAthina, Athens, Greece  Autumn Exhibition, Charles Hewitt Gallery, Sydney, Australia		“Art Contemporain”, Art auction, Drouot, Paris, France “The Frissiras Collection”, Frisira Museum, Spanbroek, Netherlands  Solo Exhibition at the Thanassis Frissiras Gallery, Athens, Greece
		2003	Selected as 1 of 12 artists to paint for 1 of the 4 programs, BBC series “Star Portraits”
		2001	Solo Exhibition at Galerie Jean Boucher, Cesson-Sevigny, France  Solo Exhibition at Le Présidial Cultural Center, Quimperlé, France
2006	150th Gala Exhibition “Mystery postcards”, The National Portrait Gallery, London, UK  “Anthropography” at Frissiras Museum, Athens, Greece	2000	“Kulturaustausch 2000” Berlin/Paris Exhibition, Berlin, Germany  Inaugural Exhibition at the Frissiras Museum, Athens, Greece
2005	“The Figure Show” at Jill George Gallery, London, UK  “Fresh Ground” inaugural exhibition at Thanassis Frissiras Art Gallery, Athens, Greece “Star Portraits”, group exhibition from BBC series at five venues in the UK: – County Hall Gallery, London – New Walk Art Gallery, Leicester – Naughton Gallery Queens University, Belfast	1999	BP Portrait Award Exhibition, The National Portrait Gallery, London, UK Awarded 2nd Prize – Painting ‘Boyish Boo’ chosen as the publicity image for Award Exhibition (press, subway posters)
		1998	“Paris-Chili” group exhibition with Le Génie de la Bastille, Paris, France  Solo Exhibition at the Tavistock Institute, London, UK

	Solo Exhibition at Gourlay's Gallery, Melbourne, Australia	1985	Solo Exhibition of Paintings funded by the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council, at Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne, Australia
	Solo Exhibition at Les 7 Lézards Jazz club, Paris, France		
1993	Solo Exhibition «Jazz Men», Hot Brass Jazz club, La Villette, Paris, France	1984	“Printmakers from Victoria” Exhibition tour around Japan: – Aichi Gallery, Japan – Inazawa Museum, Japan – Toyohashi Museum, Japan
1990	“Salon de la Jeune Peinture” art fair, Grand Palais, Paris, France		
1989	XXI International Festival of Painting, Cagnes-sur-Mer, France	1983	“Large Collages on Paper” Solo Exhibition funded by the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council, at Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne, Australia
	Exhibition “Premio Internazionale di Pittura VIII Francia D’Argento”, Tuscany, Italy. Awarded 2nd Prize by Jean-Marie Drot, Director of the French Academy, Villa Medecis, Rome	1982	“Directions Now” Print Exhibition organised by Victorian Ministry for the Arts, at Monash University, Melbourne, Australia
	Exhibition “8 Australian artists, Bicentenary of the French Revolution”, Australian Embassy, Paris, France		Canberra Times National Prize Exhibition, Canberra, Australia – Awarded 2nd Prize
1988	Exhibition at the «Salon d’Automne», Grand Palais, Paris, France	1981	Solo Exhibition of Large Etchings/ Aquatints funded by the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council, at Auguste Blackman Gallery, Sydney, Australia
	“Salon de la Jeune Peinture” art fair, Grand Palais, Paris, France. Received Special Mention from the Jury and selected for Solo Exhibition within the salon		Henri Worland Printmaking Prize Exhibition, at the Warnambool Gallery, Victoria, Australia
1986	Exhibition at the “Salon d’Automne”, Grand Palais, Paris, France		



# contact

residence	Paris, France
tel	+33 6 72 97 26 65
e-mail	rebeccadriffield@free.fr
instagram	@rebeccadriffield
website	<a href="http://www.rebecca-driffield.com">www.rebecca-driffield.com</a>