

Recording scripts

Unit 6

Starting off

Recording script CD1 Track 15

A

Magda: This portrait is one which I started from a photo of myself actually, but after a time I came to the conclusion that photos aren't that good when you're trying to be creative. You know, I found myself sort of imitating the photo and that wasn't very satisfying. So I switched to drawing in front of a mirror instead. Anyway, I like this self-portrait because I think it says a few things about me, like that I'm quite neat for example, perhaps a little unadventurous in the way I dress – not like most artists – but I think I've captured quite a sincere and thoughtful expression on my face. Also, I think I look quite sort of approachable, not at all threatening, someone it's nice to be around. At least I hope so.

B

Evelyn: You know, I've done quite a few portraits of friends and classmates and so on, normally from photographs, and people are usually quite complimentary about them, but you should have heard some of the things my friends said about this one! 'You're so serious!' 'We never see you concentrating like that!' 'You're not like that at all – you're normally always joking and laughing!' You see, I did the drawing in front of a mirror as a sort of experiment to see if I could do a self-portrait from life like Rembrandt or someone, and I found I kept having to move my head, so my hair kept getting in the way and I got quite frustrated. It took me hours! Still, I'm quite proud of the way my eyes turned out, sort of thoughtful and sincere.

C

Lindsay: I've looked at quite a few self-portraits because I was interested how this one turned out, which was not at all how I expected. Most artists look like they're really concentrating hard and you don't catch them smiling much. In this one I look like sort of uptight, moody, even a bit aggressive or angry. I'd just come back from holiday and my face was pretty tanned. I found it pretty difficult to capture that tanned look and my fair hair in a black-and-white portrait. I'd like to look more relaxed, though.

Listening Part 3

Recording script CD1 Track 16

Interviewer: Good evening. I have in the studio with me today the distinguished still-life and portrait artist, Liam Carolan. Liam, when did you first realise you had artistic talent?

Liam Carolan: Well, it was always impressed upon me when I was young, because both my parents were artistic, the family shall we say. My father taught in an art school and was also a very good portrait painter, though he did them really just out of interest – not to earn a living that way. He had a fair number of exhibitions in London before the war, but with abstract paintings, and so he was quite avant-garde for the time. He even had one with Picasso.

Interviewer: So did you always have it in mind to be a professional artist?

Liam Carolan: Well, no, I wouldn't say ... I think my experience in art college made me sceptical of that idea and I was rather disillusioned for quite a long time and I didn't do very much in the way of art after leaving college. The training that I had wasn't really directed towards the sort of things I'm doing now. In those days students were encouraged towards more cerebral attitudes to art and what I do is, some people would say, obsolete or even perhaps naïve, but I'm still painting figurative paintings today.

Interviewer: Why would people prefer a painted portrait to a photograph of themselves?

Liam Carolan: I think generally most people feel that if you have something made by hand rather than by a machine and if it's a design feature in the house, then a portrait hanging on the wall is much better to live with, although people who like living in very modern environments might prefer to have a photograph hanging on the wall. But whether it's a portrait or a landscape, I think most people if you asked, 'Do you prefer a photograph or a painting?', I think most people would say a painting.

Interviewer: Do you tend to paint your subjects from life or from photos?

Liam Carolan: Well, I used to paint from photos but now I tell people I'd prefer not to. But interestingly, when I have done so the reaction has been, 'I thought that was a photograph!' In other words the painting looks like the photo, so I think a painting from life gives life to the painting and why that's the case is for many reasons to do with your contact with the person that's in front of you, the tension that's created when you're dealing with an individual one to one. There's a nervousness and an adrenalin that goes into that painting which is sparked off by that interaction. It's not something you think about when you're in the process of doing it, but the technique is completely different when you're painting someone as a three-dimensional object.

Interviewer: Mmm. How do you go about capturing the personality of your sitters?

Liam Carolan: I think just to try and paint what you see in front of you, which is a difficult enough task, is sufficient. And I think that if you do that, then something about the person will come through without you forcing it. And often I think perceptions of the qualities of a sitter or a subject are things that are noticed by the observer of a portrait rather than things produced by the painter. I think there's something about a painted portrait as opposed to a photograph which draws the viewer in and then they see things about the subject that they'd never noticed before.

Interviewer: You've done a number of self-portraits, haven't you? Why did you do those?

Liam Carolan: Really just for practice. If I haven't got a model around, then I'm left with myself. Actually, I've usually been dissatisfied with the results. It's not necessarily more difficult than doing other people, but there is a problem of getting the scale. I always stand almost next to the sitter when I'm doing an oil painting to get it life size and if you're looking in a mirror, the image that you see is always smaller. I've got one self-portrait that I like and I think that most people think that I look rather ferocious. But from a technical point of view I think that it's good. It isn't, I think, a particularly flattering one in fact.

Speaking Part 3

Recording script CD1 Track 17

Pair A

Teacher: Here are some pictures showing some of the roles books play in our lives. First, talk to each other about the different roles which books play in our lives. Then decide which activity is the most demanding.

Martyna: Do you read books, Hans?

Hans: Not much, to tell you the truth.

Martyna: Well, I do. I'm studying literature at university, so I read a huge number of books – not for pleasure, though I do read some books for pleasure as well.

Hans: Well, the photos. This one here looks quite demanding – there’s a librarian putting books back on the shelves, she’s having to be very methodical, she’s probably having to work quite quietly, not make a loud noise, so as not to disturb people in the library ...

Martyna: Yes, I think if I was doing that, I’d probably feel a bit frustrated, because I like to chat and talk quite a lot and I’m not too organised so I’d find that quite demanding.

Hans: And there’s this one with someone just relaxing and reading a novel probably ...

Martyna: Yes, not very demanding, but quite enjoyable. And this one here of the teacher helping the child to learn to read ...

Hans: Yes, that could be quite demanding because as a child it’s probably quite hard to grasp the concept of reading.

Martyna: And for the teacher too to have the patience. I think if I was the teacher, I’d find it very satisfying to actually teach kids how to read for the first time.

Hans: But again, you’d have to be very methodical, which you say you aren’t, so I imagine for you that would be pretty demanding. And here’s another one with a boy studying, taking notes, which could be quite demanding. It depends what it is, though. He could be studying ...

Pair B

Teacher: Here are some pictures showing some of the roles books play in our lives. First, talk to each other about the different roles which books play in our lives. Then decide which activity is the most demanding.

Carlos: Well, the first picture shows someone writing in their diary. I think this shows how books can be used to keep a record of what we do and our lives ...

Antonia: Yes, and also our thoughts and our feelings. Then in the second one there’s a teacher using a textbook – I think it is to teach something and this shows how books can be a store of knowledge ...

Carlos: Yes, all the things we can’t carry in our heads can be kept in books ...

Antonia: Or on computers nowadays ...

Carlos: Yes, and the third one shows a librarian, someone working with books ... So let’s move on to the next part. Which do you think is the most demanding, Antonia?

Antonia: Well, although I like the idea of keeping a diary with all the things I’ve done each day and the people I’ve seen, I think this one with the diary would probably be the one I’d find the hardest because I’m just too tired at the end of the day. What about you?

Carlos: Yes, I’m the same, but also perhaps the one of the student taking notes, because he might have to grasp some quite difficult concepts ...

Antonia: Yes, and when you’re taking notes you’re usually reformulating someone else’s ideas, which you’ve got to understand, and then expressing them in a format which you find easy to work with yourself.

Carlos: And which others do you think are really challenging? This one perhaps with the teacher teaching a child to read?