**What’s my art about…?**

I am Kevin George 55yrs of age, born in South London where I grew up before moving to Kent, then Norway, Manchester and subsequently Harrogate, North Yorkshire. I started drawing around four or five years of age, after seeing my father sketch an image of a face I believe it was and deciding I wanted to (and possibly knew how to) do the same. This, whilst having already learnt, read, write understand and voice logical; if not disconcerting, arguments about anything I had read, heard and or deduced on anyone who had their “facts wrong” and I felt needed correcting.

I was unlike my siblings, parents or most children above or below my age and was acutely aware of this from the moment I became self-aware and of my existence in a world I’d realised was filled with strange and different people. Which was I guess, very young. As well as having the hyperactivity of a Meerkat on amphetamine, I also possessed an ability to stop and sit still and focus for hours and days on end sometimes, drawing, painting, making things, or simply arranging “things” in an order.

The fact is, I was such a perfectionist and had to have my images contain so much realism and thus detail, that only complete and utter concentration, and focus could suffice. My concentration probably bordered on the obsessive and was painstaking for those affected, yet utterly inherent and innate to me. Images came from me at times, without my knowledge, understanding, or particular interest, often-astonishing viewers, and me by the results and how much time I could expend.

I never questioned my need to draw, I never questioned why I drew or painted or made what I did, although did sometimes wonder why I’d spent so long on a piece of work I could not see the purpose of, meaning behind or beauty in. I did however, often question, and wonder how and where the ability came from and what made it possible in some people rather than others. Nonetheless, I simply did as I had always done by allowing my mind to do what it felt was needed, content in the knowledge that the reasoning for what I had done was already known, would eventually surface and or if it did not, that too was meant to be.

I continued to practice art with every medium my mother would allow me to have and at six received my first oil paint set, which I loved learning to control, manipulate, and experiment with. My parents however, lived in constant terror of the horrendous mess succumbing to my demands might one day cause, seeing as I required “turps” as well as a paint they had never come across, but soon learnt to hate.

By this time, I had already deduced; God did not exist, through meticulous interrogation of my Sunday school teachers and learned men of the cloth. Concluded, discrimination, (picking on someone for reason of his or her physical or perceived difference) was not a nice thing to do. That I could not abide the feel of real wool or people touching my skin nor understand why life happened around me as opposed to with me and that there must be something wrong with me, if I think like Spok and no one else appears to.

It had also become apparent that I lacked any discernible imagination (which is possibly, why I could only conjure images of what I had seen or were seeing), sense of humour, empathy, or particular desire to mix with other kids as they were; to coin a phrase I used for many years, “stupid and illogical.” What, I lacked in the neuro-typicals’ innate understanding, acceptance and comfort in and with themselves, others and the world around them all, was compensated with obsessive tendencies and rituals, pragmatism, punctiliousness, logic, inappropriateness from unfiltered candour and argumentativeness. With the addition of an overly literal understanding of many things I read or heard, a need for clarity, conciseness, and order, a propensity for capricious behaviour and thought as well the unwavering desire for knowledge and uncompromising refusal to accept change or do what I was told. It was lucky that I at least saw in pictures, and could find a way to communicate what I saw and felt through my art.

At 11yrs of age, when asked to make some paintings for the “Premature Baby Unit at Kings Hospital London” I went about creating 12 A1 sized oil paintings depicting Christmas and the Nativity, which I then donated and where subsequently sold for charity. This was possibly the age at which I first felt that the act of creating art was not merely therapy for my unceasing, un-quietened mind, but a visual voice I had which others only in books seemed to possess; a way in which to express myself, without hurting myself, others or getting into trouble. I continued to paint and draw as often as I could, whilst also harbouring a growing, yet youthfully naive aspiration of one day becoming a philosopher.

My work continued, throughout school, two colleges, the birth of my daughter and beyond, moving from an obsession with people, faces and portraiture to landscapes and the beauty within so much that people perceived as mundane. Always adhering to my need to show mastery of my medium, conceit for fellow artists, and arrogance derived from an act I had never really felt required any conscious effort on my part, yet seemed forced or contrived by my contemporaries.

Fortunately, due to having being fairly successful in business and work and often prone to bouts of mentally instability, I have been able to have reasonably lengthy periods off to paint, throughout my life, without a necessity to earn a continuous living from them. I staged a number of private exhibitions in and around Kent, South London and Manchester, sold some work, but have generally kept everything that was not commissioned, as I have attachment issues with “my things” and therefore all of my work.

**My fascination with gates, windows, doors, barriers and the neuro-typical condition of not being able to see past them.....metaphorically of course?;**

One day a tutor said to me, “Kevin, you can’t sit drawing such small landscapes in the studio...you need to get out into nature and experience, feel, and be a part of it.” Following my contention that nature was “where you found” it as opposed to where you looked and that I see the whole world as framed, even if only by the limitations of our peripheral vision or mind. In addition, explaining that my rationale behind the immense detail acted to draw a viewer into the painting. Similar (I believed), to someone who might need to squint, focus or get closer to a view of nature, in order to assimilate what they think they have seen and what is actually visible when they look closer. The size of my pieces on the other hand were merely a reaction to what material I had at my disposal at the time and what image I thought might best be framed with that particular shape and size.

Moreover, my own experiences had clearly fixed mental images of the most beautiful parts of nature having been seen or glimpsed through the frame of a window, border, or boundary of some description. In a car, plane, a house, or high-rise flat or window, even with the turn of one’s head, every image appears framed.

Nevertheless, in order to appease my Tutor, get the hell out of the studio, prove a point, and have some r and r, I took a week or so out driving around the Surrey and Kent countryside, doing watercolour and pencil sketches, taking photos and generally recording my experiences.

However, having spent the majority of my week climbing over, going around, or blocked by fences, gates and walls, I returned to the studio and started painting landscapes with more obvious barriers. Large fences that cut across the whole painting, gates that took up three quarters of the canvas and beautiful landscapes painted on canvas then vitiated by obstructions and barriers; lengths of wood, fence posts, weeds or a gate. I painted large-scale and life sized walls, doors, windows and barriers, whether obvious or perceived, abstract or realistic. I painted what I had long since painted.

You see, my tutor had failed (as it appears most people do in life generally) to look more closely at the “detail” in the earlier work he criticized, as they all contained barriers in some way. All highlighted at a separation, detachment, and isolation from some other thing...probably the chaos of everything else that is not nature. Yet, these things were overlooked, little or no time was taken to examine the meaning of my work further than on first impression and the pseudo-realistic harmony of an uncomplicated landscape was enough for him to decide there was or would be nothing further to learn from anything more than his superficial glance and uninformed observations.

More insulting however, was the tutors’ assumption that the paintings I had made were more “fictionalised” images than a reaction to or understanding of nature outside the walls of the studio. Whereas, had he known about the person he was supposedly helping develop, he’d have understood that I had memorised thousands of skies and landscapes here and around the world and had accumulated a catalogue of photographs and digital images of as many skies, landscapes and things of interest. A mental and readily available bank of emotive visual moments, which necessitated my capturing them and therefore had reason in my work.

I had already taken note of, considered, compared, and incorporated the divided, historically; land owned nature of the English landscape to that of say the far less restricted nature in Norway. I had travelled to many places, been to the Americas, Canada and much of Europe, seeing and absorbing that which was relevant to me. Had read and studied countless landscape artists and their work, since a child and had long since developed my own visual language to convey my reaction to nature, perception of and my place within it.

As with all I do, every action taken, image produced and piece of artwork, had already been logically considered, analysed, obsessed about, and decided upon; far in advance of the feckless opinions of my peers. I decided never to allow myself to again, believe or take direction from someone incapable of the task.

From here, my worked moved into a deeper interest in portraying doors, windows, barriers, and openings, using varying forms of literal and abstract imagery as visual metaphors for how I saw myself and for what I perceived to be a failing in humanity and its appreciation of beauty. Often however, reverting to the more obvious, literal image, the type that a neuro-typical mind appears to complicate without reason and by doing so, amuses me so much.

I possibly have an obsession with doors, paths, windows openings, barriers, misdirection and blatant deceit as well as and the beauty in an object, which is so mundane and apparently unthought-of, that the average person just does not see, yet resonates a significance I am only able to respond to through my art.

**On a more Personal level**

My work is, has always been and will undoubtedly continue feature or hope to represent a wholly personal reflection of my sense of displacement, isolation, need for control and familiarity. The loneliness and isolation that some of my pieces attempt to represent has not merely been an introspective view, but also a sadness I have for humanity and their naivety, lack of foresight and inability to embrace all that is beautiful and could be seen as such if they only saw as I do.

I take things very literally and am comforted by the familiar, a necessity to someone who cannot abide change. Consequently, I find it difficult to adopt the ideas of others and appreciate or care for their personal interpretations or opinions of the world around us and just about anything else.

My work indicates the obsessive need to control my medium, the image and how they are both presented; much as I do with myself. However, I myself remain detached, emotionally, physically and socially and choose to be, need to be...obstinately. Rational, clinical, untouched, void of detritus and lacking in empathic reasoning, my contempt toward the irrationality of the human emotion only serves to reinforce reclusion within the process as well as subject matter of my work.

For this reason, my work has never sought to compete with that of my peers on the same stage, as that would be to assume a similitude, which does not exist. As those people who’s lives are driven and controlled by their AS (Autistic Spectrum) disabilities and strengths, shouldn’t ever be compared to that of a neuro-typical. A fact I would like to change.

**A few words on Landscapes**

Landscapes continue to reoccur throughout my artistic and personal life, a fact I have put down to my feeling of being grounded by nature, its serenity, and greenness. Green is the colour of life in plants and trees. Green is life. In nature, I feel alive; I feel life, allowed to feel that way. And whilst there, I can breathe and feel a part of this world and its beauty, so in my work I continue to revisit nature to replenish my air supply and remind the world that there is far more to take in when your sight is clear, there is a reality in nature, no matter what humanity does to it.

The world is a loud, busy, fast, and confusing place, in which I cannot hear the reassuring sound of myself. Sound and inner tranquillity are restored when I create art and am able to control the volume and landscapes have the ability to do that for me, whilst acting as a voice for my personal inaudibility. Another aspect of nature that acts to calm and reassure, is in its repetitiveness. Although constantly changing, it does so with order, in phases and recurrently and can therefore be trusted and relied upon and used as a measure of time outside of the realm that the worlds “watch driven” live. All required comforts for those like me.

Nature exist in its own inherent order yet has no order until humanity imposes such upon it, yet always there remains, sky and landscape, sky and seascape, always the reassurance of order, which I have been obsessed with for over 27yrs.