

Women's Images of Trees
Robin Richmond April 2nd, 2017



Three paintings in progress in the studio.



Detail of "The Water Garden"

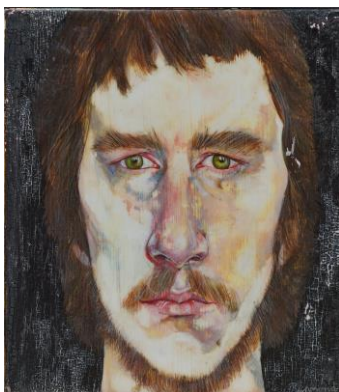
My last 3 blogs have been about other artists, but this week I thought I would write about what's going on in my studio.

In 1981, I participated in a very controversial show at the ICA in London and The Arnolfini in Bristol called *Women's Images of Men*. It was my one and only foray into working with a women's group. I am not a joiner and a bit of a grouch and a Groucho about collectives. It was eye opening. In those days the movement wasn't called Feminism but Women's Liberation and the group I joined had members who ranged widely in their political orientation. Some embraced man-hating radicalism - some were less angry. It was very very fascinating. My detailed realist proto-Flemish portrait of my male partner's face, which Caroline Tisdall in the Guardian described and illustrated in her review, was subtitled - embarrassingly enough for him - as "*Portrait of the sensitive modern male*". My painting was hung next to a painting of an erect penis between amputated legs. So there you go...

Having enjoyed the experience of showing work with other women I thought I would stay on in the collective for the next show. We all met up to discuss this the next year and having no childcare at the time I had to bring my young son along to the meeting. There was little sisterly support for this, which should have rung loud alarm bells. When we finally had to decide on a theme for the next show there was complete quiet. No one could figure out how to better our last show's title. Into this liberated silence my little boy suddenly piped up "What about Women's images of trees?". It was hilarious to me but not one other person laughed. I left the collective that day.

And yet this story came back to me today as I was working in my studio on new paintings that are about being in the landscape, in nature. Water, trees, reflection, air, weather are my subject matter and have been for a long time, not painted figuratively but allusively and abstractly. These are paintings about memory. These are paintings about the feeling that you get when you are hacking your way through a forest outside in the real world and inside your own head. They are about being lost, in all the ways of that word.

Women's Images of Trees indeed.



Portrait of JAH , 1979.
Watercolour on Wood Panel.