

Chris Neate Film Transcript 2020

I used to sit through endless management meetings and I used to spend the whole time listening, but at the same time drawing, doodling.

When you are talking about doodling you are starting already to go into a technique that you were using later on which is sort of the automatic drawing techniques you know used by many mediumistic and spirits artists and also the surrealist artists too and that often takes time to develop, so I imagine that there were times when you were doodling...

I think it started probably with the meetings because although I was listening to what was going on and in fact participating, I was spending as much time, if not more, doing the doodling. And the more pre-occupied I was with the topic being discussed, the more I realised that the freer or more complex the drawing became.

I don't have to be in silence or a private place to draw, although having said this I am usually quiet actually, but my mind is absolutely full. It's full, constantly full of the past, it's never the present or very rarely the present or the future. I am sort of absolutely pre-occupied by thoughts of my own past but also of myself at other times.

I always feel that I have had a life that never happened... I've always felt that and I've always felt also that I was never spontaneous. I also felt that I was never young.

Could you sort of expand on that? Do you sort of mean that you're an observer? Your drawings are full of clouds and crowds and people describe them as clouds of witnesses or souls and you talk about that and they're like a gossamer, a mesh and a communication... that's the way I interpret what you're saying by never lived. You are just observing.

Apparently I was like it as a baby and as a child. My parents said that I used to be absolutely still and quiet, just watching. If I close my eyes, I don't get darkness, I have endless colour and movement and light and faces.

That's interesting because a lot of your work is black and white, and yet you see all the colour here.

I know and yet I love colour.

But you don't draw in colour... why is that do you think?

I don't think I know how to handle it.

Do you have any preconceived idea of what you're going to draw or is it just a surprise to you?

No. I just start with a mark. Like I could do it on this table.

Do you start in the same position?

No. I start and I just make the first mark and make more marks and do more things. And it's to do with also the pressure of my hand and seeing how light I can make my hand and how fluid I can make my hand move.

I don't think we see things as they actually are. The fact that we see things in the way that we do is not necessarily how things are.

I think with your work, they are always to the edge... the edge of the board, but there is always some point of entry for a viewer. You allow some part for the eye to focus on. So it could be, often I see these sort of black figures coming in. You know they just look larger or at the moment I am seeing geometric forms, you know in the latest one there was a triangle in there for example. And that's interesting as it gives us a way to focus in on something that is in a state of flux. As you said, it's suspension, and I find that that is coming through in your work.

Yeah. I think that in a sense the anchor points are like anchor points in our existence because that happens to all of us really – situations that are more significant or people that we link to more or something, they form, or beliefs that we have, they form an anchor to the flow of everything else.

I wanted to ask you about automatic writing because automatic writing and automatic drawing often go hand in hand and one leads into the other. And I have seen that you actually have merged both. Some of the lines you could read and others actually turned into more of the design of the drawing. Yes I wondered how much time you spent doing drawing and writing?

I haven't done writing so much like more recently. They weren't distressing in any way but they were quite upsetting at times, the things that came and the thing that was written. Quite often about the loss of children or sort of terrible sorrow and grief used to be what came out really. They were predominantly about women's grief really, in one-way or another.

I've noticed that there's definitely, I don't know whether its because you look at some of your work and automatically you think of lace, but there is a female energy and I wondered, you've spoken about feeling very close to female ancestors of yours. And what it your great grandmother was a dressmaker?

Yeah. In some way I think I am sort of revisiting the past and pulling through people from then really. My, as you say, my family possibly, but not only my family, all sorts... souls really. And it's like our lives, how one tiny incident, which can happen, can have a huge significance. We may not even know this and we may not even recognise it at the time or even ever. But that tiny little interlude can lead to unfolding worlds really.

How do you feel drawing is for you? Is it a healing process?

I think it is sort of essential really. It is like sleeping or something.

So it is so much part of your life?

It's sort of like if I don't do it for a while, I think I would become quite anxious and disturbed to be honest.

So you feel that there is a compulsion that you have to draw?

Yeah.

Do you feel that they have a spiritual side to them you know... a deeper meaning? It does feel often that you are drawing invisible things. Then by putting them onto a board, we're communicating something maybe at a different level.

I don't think I can show what they are meant to show. I think it might just be about time and about the passing of time and about how impermanent we are and about how light moves and changes and darkens and lightens. And about how everything flows and about how what we think of as being ordinary life, there are masses of other lives lived and working behind what we see. And it's what the drawings are showing really I think, is that although people move beyond and though the things we love go and though the world we know disappears, it is there always and endlessly because it is never what we see it as being, as it exists eternally.