

The CROOKED LUTE

thought-process of Edward Povey

*An insight
into the mechanism behind
one Povey painting*

For those who have wondered what goes into the making of Edward Povey's paintings, particularly the "Lodger Paintings", or has been curious about how they work, what follows will be insightful.

Povey explains all the stages of the thinking, planning and painting, not by way of adding a narrative to the mysterious world that he shows us in these works, but only to showing the technical hurdles which must be surmounted, and the foundation of consideration and choice that must be laid into place before he can ever proceed to execute one of the paintings.

It's worth noting that he never actually elucidates the multitude of skills involved

in carrying out these tasks, for lack of time and space, but he at least draws our attention to the infrastructure of tasks involved.

It's also worthwhile following this to the end only so that, like me, you might sit back and review the assumptions you might have made about the ease that talent provides. Not so. Talent might produce the vision of a scenario for a painting; and sheer practice might hone the skills necessary; but nothing prepares you for the number of hours he needs for each painting, and the intensity of concentration that is required throughout those hours, so as to cover the work that becomes clearly necessary here.

The Lodger Paintings

Over the decades Edward Povey has evolved his subject matter, symbolism, and even aspects of his painting style. He preceded every change with months of thought, reams of considered writing, and research through the history and techniques of art. His goal was always to make paintings that are authentic and heartfelt. Anything less he regards as counterfeit and a waste of precious time.

Edward says: "I've invariably wanted to show complicated emotions, and this has been the stone in my shoe.

In the 1970s a Persian refugee came to live with my family in a slate mining town in Wales, changing my life as an artist, although I couldn't have known that at the time. Mehrangis Mahboubian became an aunt to us all, always beaming and kind, but knowing that her brother was imprisoned in Iran, she could never sleep. *Never sleep!* All those long snowy nights I would sing to her, walking her through her fears to rest. Tragically her brother was later shot by a firing squad.



Serenading the Lodger, 1999, Edward Povey, Oil on canvas, 24 X 22 ins / 60.96 X 55.88 cm.
In the private collection of a former director of The Morgan Chase Bank
in a mansion in the South of England

Many years later in my University of Wales studio I made the painting called *Serenading the Lodger*, which irrevocably brought my distant experience of Mehrangis onto canvas in a congested and comforting composition. I had interlocked a lute-player lost in reverie beside a sleeping woman, tea cups forgotten on the bedside table, and with a draught of the snowy streets outside.

This painting haunted and intrigued me, as did the now deceased Mehrangis until two decades later in a Gulf Coast studio in the United States where I began an entire collection of paintings on the subject. At their core the paintings are about cherishing and tearful compassion against an underlying apprehension, and the thin wire of apprehension is necessary to avoid a saccharine disposition towards empathy.

In the National Gallery of Art in London I stumbled upon Raphael's *Ansidei Madonna*. His figures' flesh appeared vulnerable, serving his need to project the sympathy and ethereal delicacy of the Virgin and the dead Christ in his altarpieces five centuries ago. Imagining my compassionate lute player and wearied woman painted in Raphael's way gave me a fluttering and tumbling feeling in my chest, picturing those hands and fragile features looking so exposed, as if they would easily bleed.

In the year 1505 Raphael formed the skin exquisitely in simple greens and grays somewhat like Vermeer, only to float a *blood glaze* over it, bringing

warmth and transparency to the nose, ears and fingers, and a ghost of internal blood around the joints of the body. Even the bones that drew near to the surface of the skin were glazed with a film of delicate lemon. This was perfect for what had become known as the *Lodger Paintings*, not to duplicate the appearance of my Persian lodger so much as show her extreme tenderness.

But remembering the original *Serenading the Lodger* painting I knew that I must contrast Raphael's Early Renaissance flesh with a robust design that compresses the perspective of the scene, such that all the surfaces in the picture ride up against the picture plane in the most impossible way: impossible in our world, but common inside the flat world of the canvas.

So, I tipped up the table top and crockery so that we see it from two distinct vantage points like Cezanne's *Mont Sainte-Victoire* paintings, which attempted to see around corners to suggest the reality of the mountain's three-dimensionality, instead of offering a mere two-dimensional depiction

of it. This was a mission that Picasso and Braque took up in Cubism, followed by countless Expressionists afterwards.

Similarly, the man's jacket presents one unaltering block of plain chocolate brown against the painted surface, providing a tonal foundation that we willingly accept as *black* in the painting. The realistic (but entirely invented) lute is often skewed, also allowing us two angles from which to see it.

Do you see that these tricks are Modernist gambits, emphasizing the surface design of paintings? They make it flat and strongly organized in blocks of limpid tonal value, deliberately countering the tender religious flesh and the pale fabric and paper, reminiscent of Dutch Golden Age still lifes. I'm exhilarated by this blatant contradiction between vitality and vulnerability.

Those perplexing nights with Mehrangis whose sweetness was wreathed with the ghost of her imprisoned brother, became a ripping paradox within

me, although right from the beginning in war-torn London I had wanted somehow to capture the complex, darkly cherishing nature of human beings. How beautiful and complicated we are! Finally, now, this softly defenseless skin and creased fabric, all set into a robust Cubist perspective - has I think fulfilled my intentions."

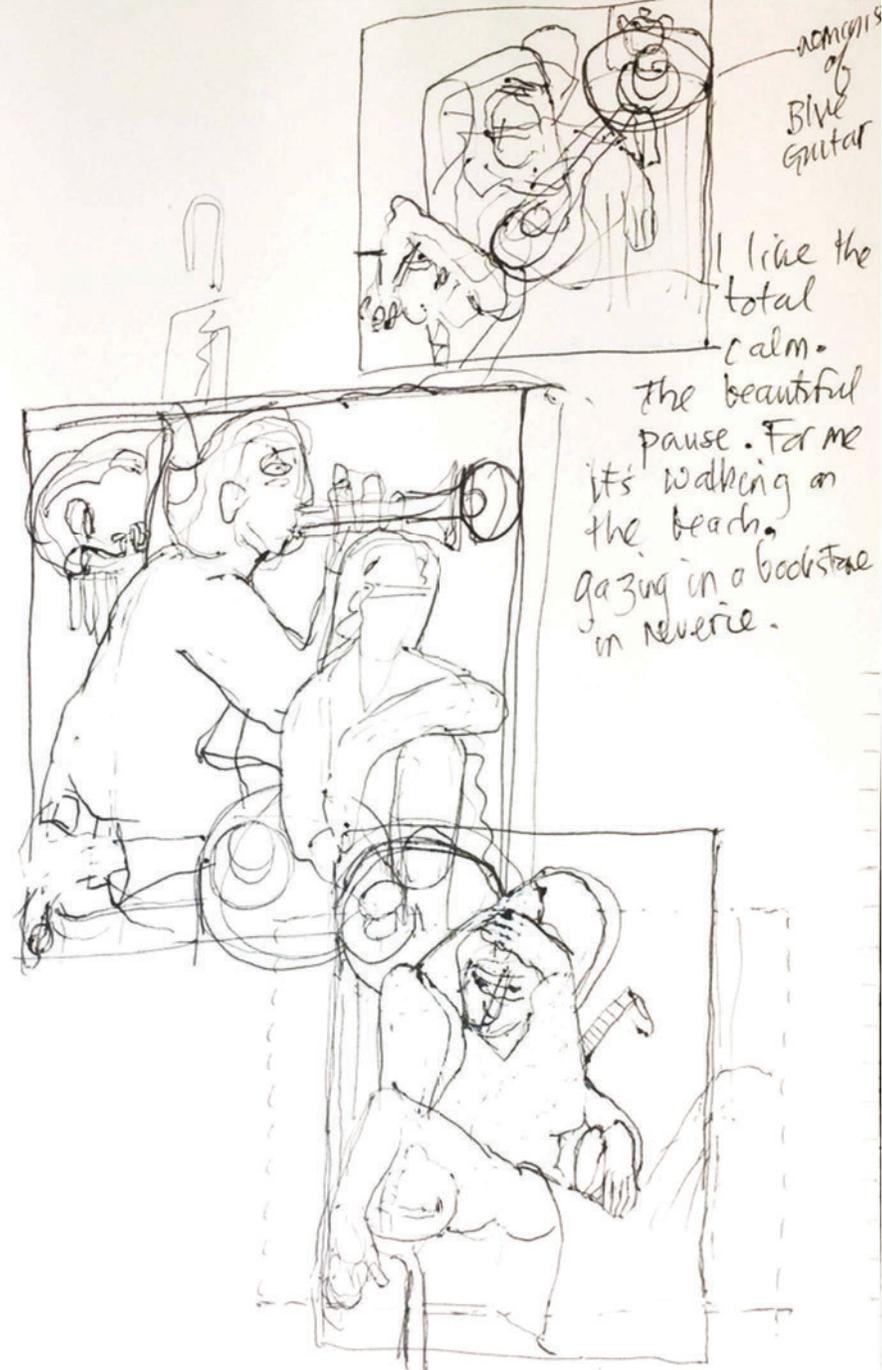
Conceiving the concept

From the first 7 months of building the Lodger Paintings collection, I have built 50 pages of 'Manifesto': writing, drawings, designs.

This contains all the contesting ideas, doubts, worries and potential solutions, sizes, proportions and workings-out of the collection.

The following pages are the ones that deal with the *Crooked Lute* painting: from pages 11 to 20, and 29 and 30 of the manifesto.

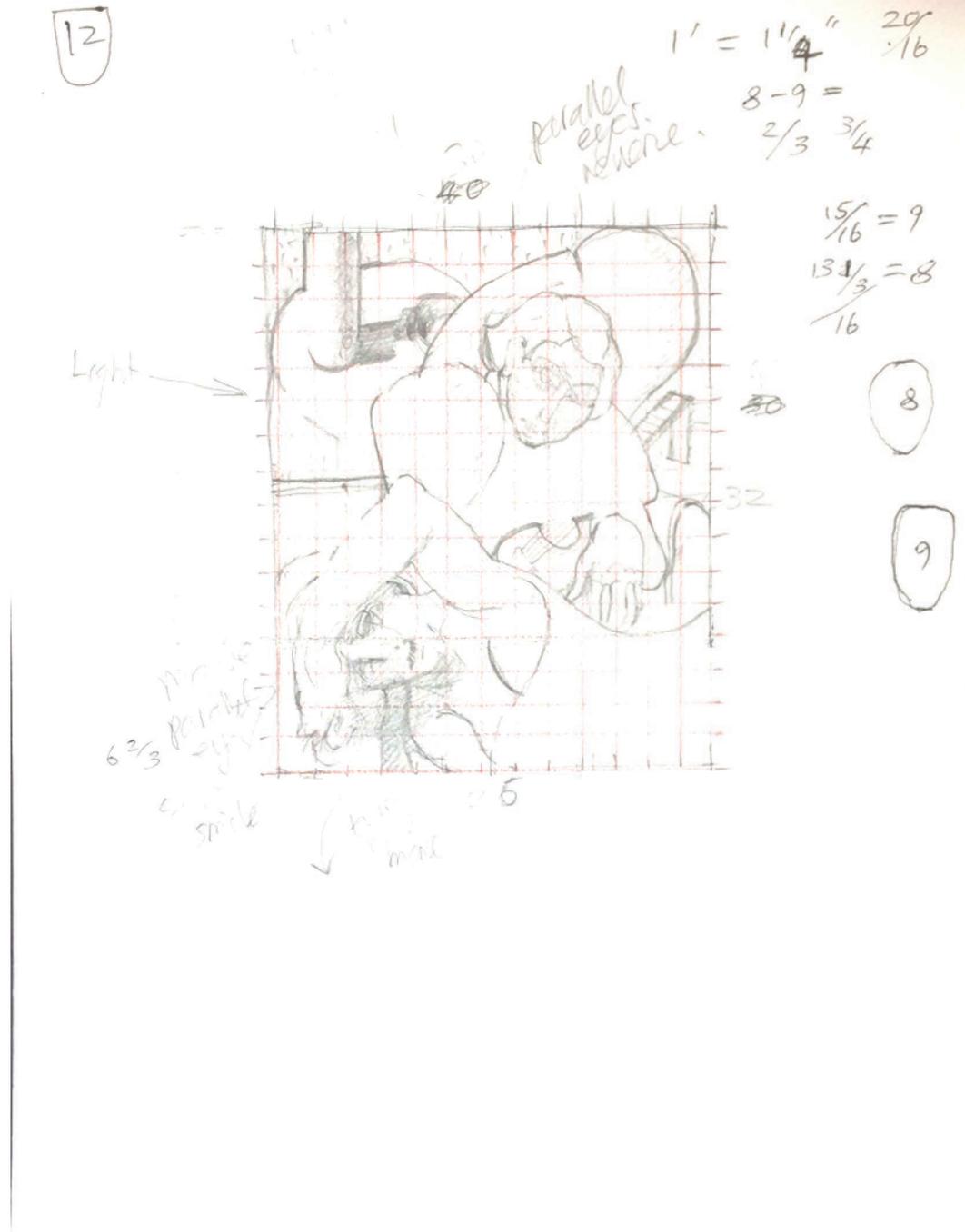
Page 11



Conceiving the concept

Here the first potential design emerges and is 'scaled'. But in this, the table is on the left side instead of the right side, the poses of the figures are different, and the books are absent.

Page 12



Conceiving the concept

Here the pose and the directions of the gazes of the figures are reconsidered.

Page 13



The Cartoon Design

The design emerged on page 14 and was worked out there, along with the size of the painting, allowing that the heads should be 8.5 inches: smaller would make them look 'toy', and larger would make them look 'overblown'. This is critical for the tidy, charming and comfortable effect of the painting, which is very deliberate.

Note the arithmetic of composing balances the width, height, head size, and the sizes of available stretcher members.

Weeks later the strip of drawing paper was added to the right side, improving the composition.

Note the original name of *Types of Serenade*.

Page 14



Orchestration of the design

Here I'm looking back on the design, and listing the details to pay attention to. Essentially mopping up the remaining questions, and becoming specific about how those elements will be handled.

Here I deal with accommodating the faceted shape of the table; the simplicity of the design; and the appearance of the lute.

Page 15

15

Above all, quiet. There's no distinct action of consequence.

There's a very firm, boxy structure at the heart of it. And few elements overall.

The table could be an asymmetrical straight-sided shape



- handy!

And the lute? Really it's

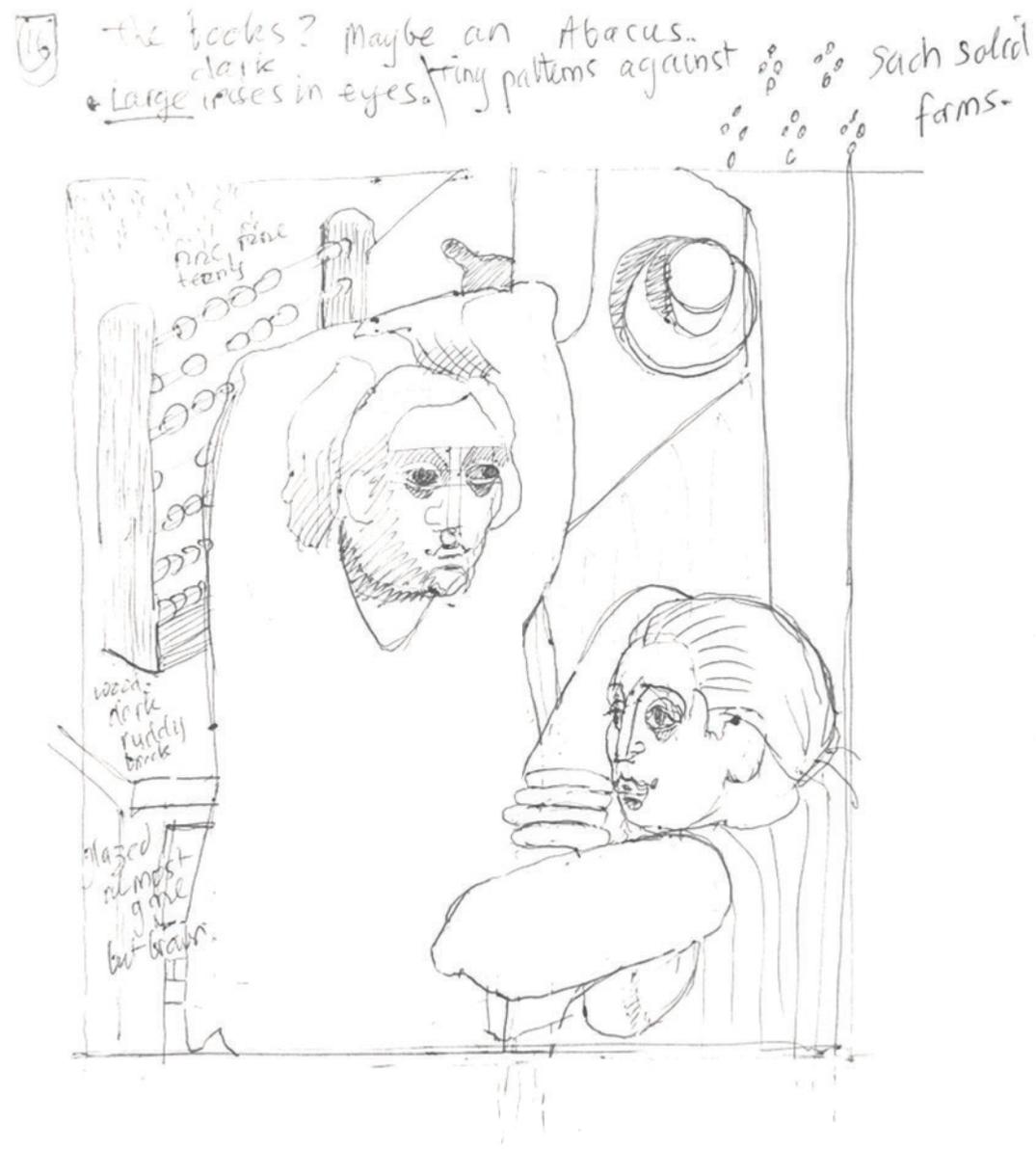
- The cannotations of Serenade / Serenity.
- The fine wood grain + strings + pegs.



Orchestration of the design

Here I consider nothing more than the design significance of the wallpaper.

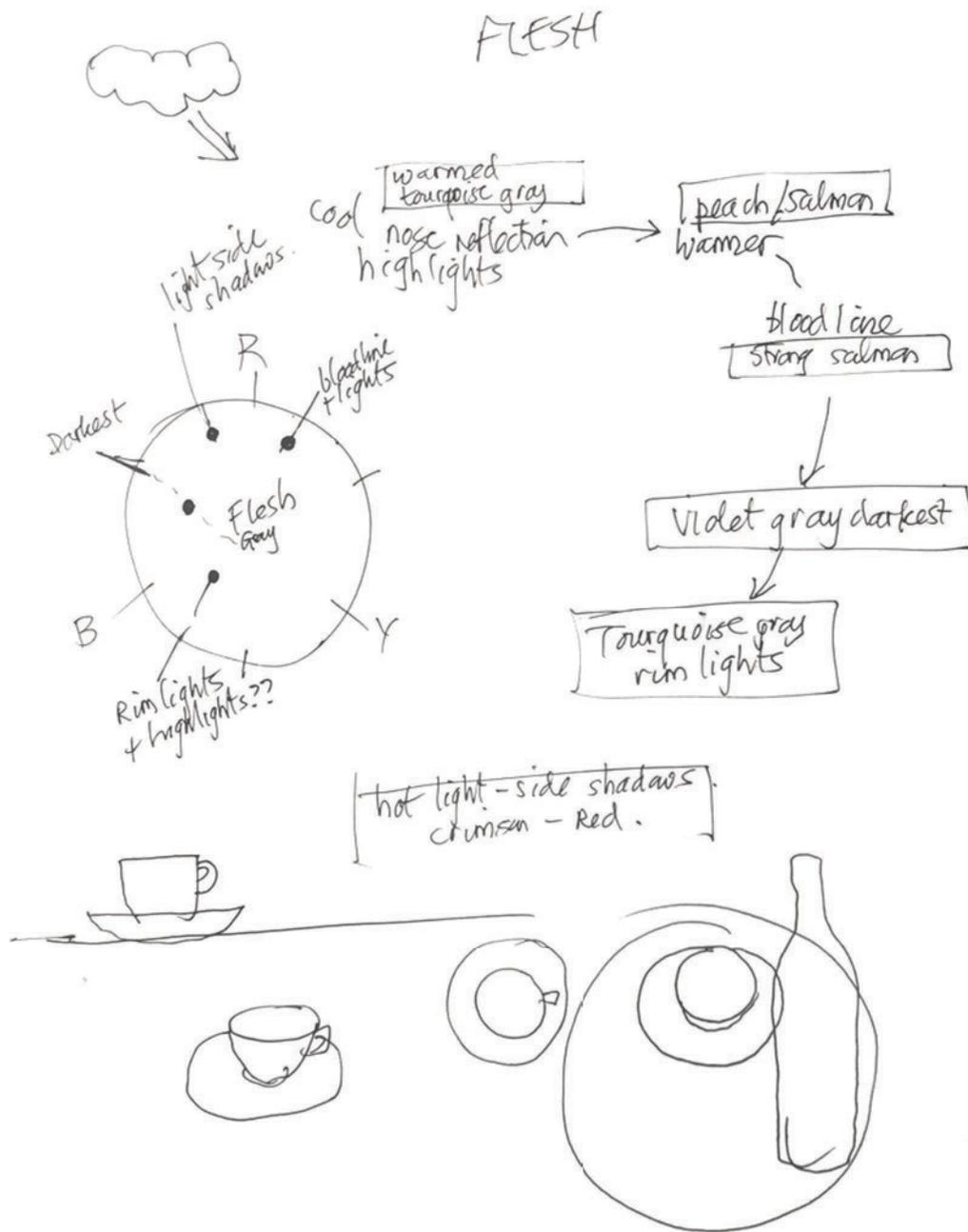
Page 16



Orchestration of the design

Here, sometime between March and June 2018 I am working out the construction of the flesh palette. I consider open daylight lights; warmer peach-salmon shadows; a 'bloodline' of strong salmon (the point at which the light pierces the translucency of the skin, illuminating the blood); violet gray dark shadows; turquoise rim lights on the side, and hot crimson-red side shadows.

This entire palette is scrapped and re-thought after my visit to the Raphael Ansidei Madonna altarpiece in July in London.



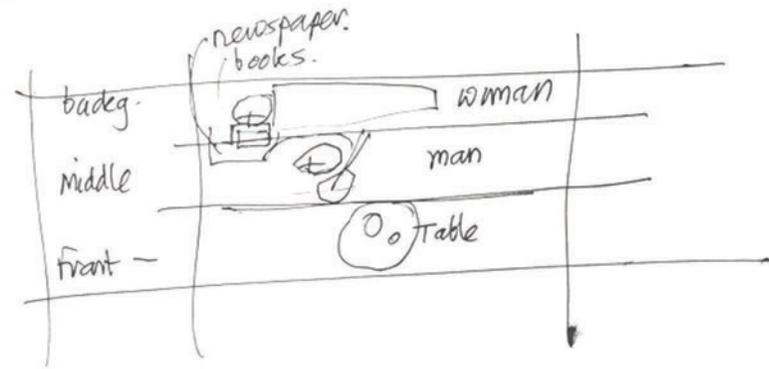
18

Orchestration of the design

This deals with the perspective of the painting, and how it is cramped and compressed.

Page 18

serenading the lodger - staging



Orchestration of the design

This is where I deal with an important concept about reducing the tonal range to three clear camps of mid-range, dark and light.

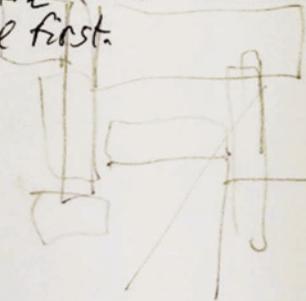
Page 19

A new (old).
• tonally contrasting / spotted people. (I never quite noticed that.)



1 person and an accessory - think in those terms. So one in a buckled + composed, simplified pose.

The other 'unsmiling' the first.



Orchestration of the design

At this point I become more clear about the tonal balance, and I have seen a black woman whose skin typifies the color I had in mind for this darkest tone. I now remove the blue-black I used in the first two lodger paintings:
SERENADING THE LODGER
and *ABACUS*.

I also consider a dark red line on the edges of forms, like Maurice Denis (1870-1943), to clarify the elements of the painting. I abandon this idea later.

I also begin to handle the perspective on the woman's arm.

20



blade.

The blade of the fat lady nude at merchant is a lovely swallowing blade.

- The suits have to be less blue, allowing other areas to reduce to the same med. grayed blue black.

Tonal value construction

- I'm interested in 3 tones, stark

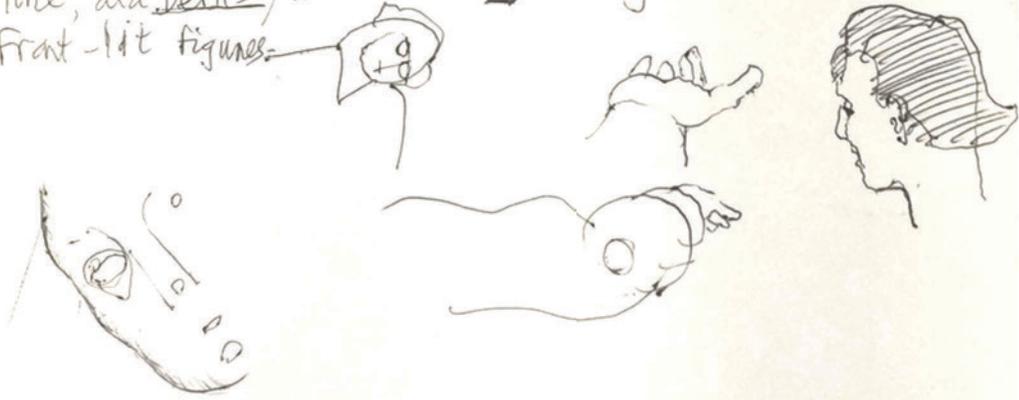


Try to stretch the values ↔

- In the middle, maybe makes the flesh close-toned.

← that same blue-grayed black - sooty shadows.

- Ultimately maybe a slight dark line, ala Denis? / with front-lit figures.
- + angled hands + heads?



Orchestration of the design

By page 29 I am still considering the maroon edge lines, and referring to Chagall and Picasso for advice.

I also worry about the complexity of the newer designs.

Page 29

(29)

The maroon lines: what's the upshot? Do I leave those indentations? What would happen?



light side

line?

palette ① for whites - simple!

palette ② for flesh - simple!

maybe refer to Chagall's Card Players and Picasso's Water Carrier Women as the wall as reference... for simple backgrounds + simple construction of objects - 2 colors.

The current ones may be too complex: too many ingredients:... too many patterns. So **Simplify.**

the source concept = Mehri in bed. Me serenading.

Her in pain, appreciative. The window onto Bethesda houses, later the steps up to Dan's bed.

Study in the London Museum

Mis-dated Friday 13th June when it is Friday 13th July – but certainly in the National Gallery of Art in London directly in front of The Ansidei Madonna by Raphael. Here I study his method of creating vulnerable-looking 'religious' flesh.

Raphael formed the body exquisitely in simple greens and grays somewhat like Vermeer, only to float a blood glaze over it, bringing warmth and transparency to the nose, ears and fingers, and a ghost of internal blood around the joints of the body. Even the bones that drew near to the surface of the skin were glazed with a film of delicate lemon. This was perfect for what had become known as the Lodger Paintings, not to duplicate the appearance of my Persian lodger so much as show her extreme tenderness.

The Lodger Ptgs Fri 13th June¹⁸ → Nat'l Gallery, London.
 still noodling at something. I want good, clear final value/color.
 A Francia / costa clarity, a Denis chard, Raphael / Ingres
 flesh - v. human.
 And maybe a disregard for a "real world" in favor of
 a heart-rendering "other flattened reality".

Set against crisp dim mid tones + fresh lights (but nothing too light)

Francesco Francia } sharp + phenomenal blacks.
 Lorenzo Costa }

The end result is the softest very human flesh.

The flesh (Raphael) has a slight color architecture, but only light solid gray green white. mid shadow. Warm raw sunna → grey-green 1/2 tone.

mother, child, John Baptist + pope? Raphael.

Flesh

lighter. Pale gray green whiter in highlights

warmer lights (shaded)

Pinks v.v. delicate only in the body's pink spots. Not pink as color architecture

almost black line on back edge

gray-green white H.2. khaki green warmet. v. dk green/gray

Then add the most delicate crimson pink.

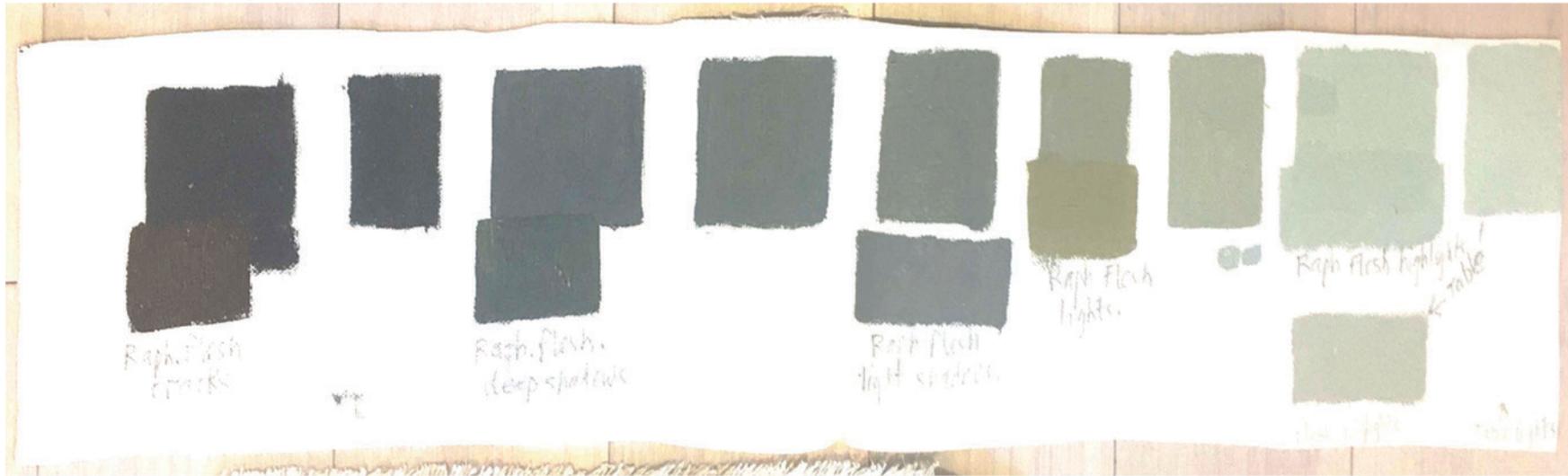
The Foes etc are thoroughly + perfectly formed + drawn. edged with dicker lines.

The Ansidei Madonna

The 1505–1507 painting by the Italian High Renaissance artist Raphael, painted during his Florentine period. It shows the Blessed Virgin Mary sitting on a wooden throne, with the child Christ on her lap. On her right John the Baptist stands, on her left Saint Nicholas is reading.



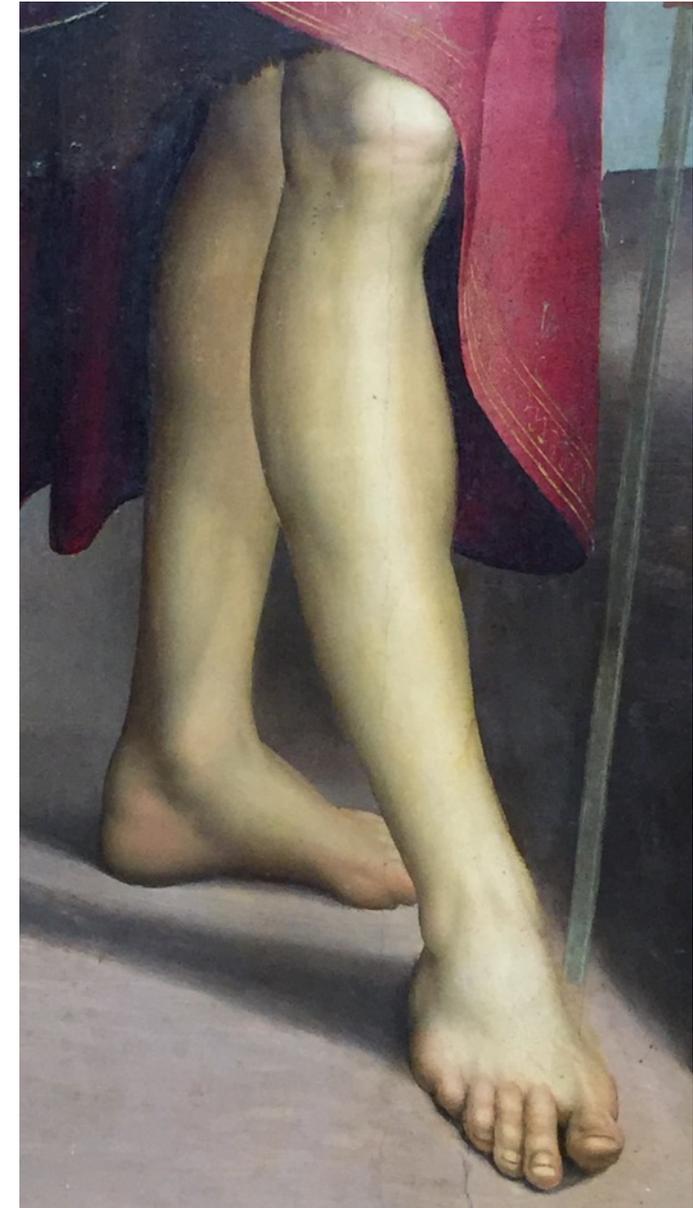
Building the Raphael palette - step 1



The first step was to attempt to reproduce all the colors convincingly, doing experiments, making paintings, saving the colors in a freezer between painting periods.

Chilly peppermint/gray/white highlights, warm khaki lights, middle gray light shade, dark blue/green/gray dark shade going to hot brown edge and crack shadows.

Note the remixing and re-considering of the colors.



Building the Raphael palette – step 2



I needed to keep the color chord of the whole painting under control, so the cloth palette had to conform to the flesh palette, with minimal changes, such as a lighter peppermint green gray highlight color added. But on fabric the colors had slightly different applications, given that there are strong bounced reflections within the folds.

Finally the colors had to be mixed in large quantities and tubed to keep the colors absolutely consistent, and also clean of dried paint from over-storing them. I can always re-tube later if I learn something new about the application of the chord.

Conclusion of the design and the decision-making about the approach to the painting

This has taken from March to mid-July 2018.

The palette was built and worked out in July and August 2018.

The design was revisited on the canvas in September 2018, making vital adjustments to draw it into line with Pythagoras's Armature of the Rectangle, to strengthen its alignment to the points and lines of emphasis that Pythagoras discovered. These points and lines are precisely, exactly in the proportions of the note structures of Western music, and are found in nature universally.



Making the Canvas

Cotton duck stretched on a nice sturdy Masterpiece stretcher from a company in California whom we like. We have also prepared the canvas with an oil wash in a beige putty color that is ideal for these paintings. It adds a little smoke and warmth to all the colors that go on top.

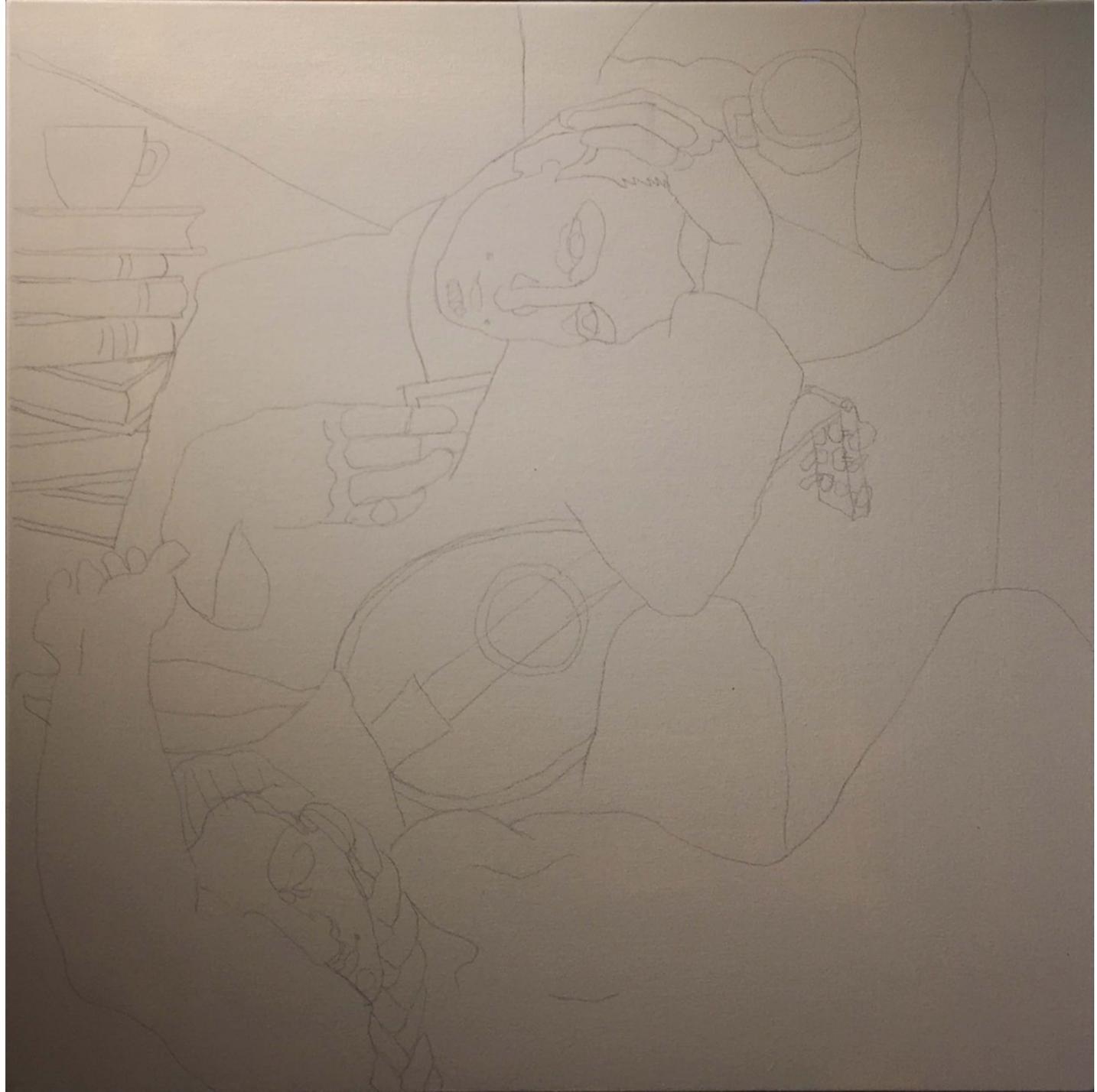
You will notice that it has pegs so that the canvas can remain tight in all geographical regions and levels of humidity. This is essential because the humidity in Santa Fe is half the humidity level here in Louisiana today.

You'll also notice that we leave deliberate pockets in the stapling of the canvas on every corner, so that the crack between stretcher members is never 'bridged' with staples. That ensures that the stretching isn't hampered by the canvas itself. All a part of the craft of making lasting paintings.



Transferring the design

Firstly I have to simply transfer the design as it was conceived in the cartoon. It is now September



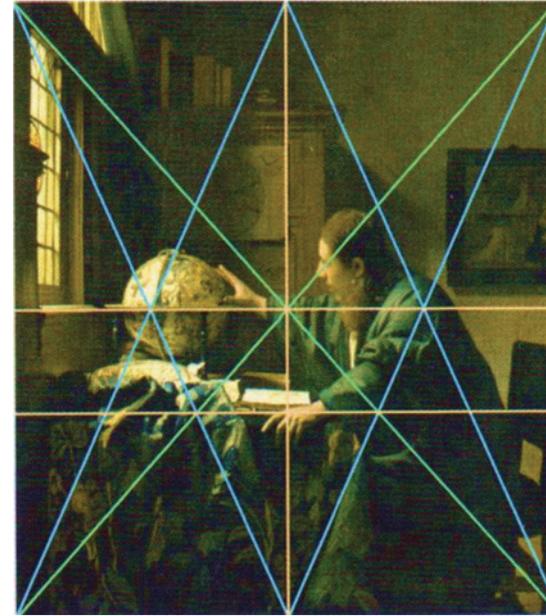
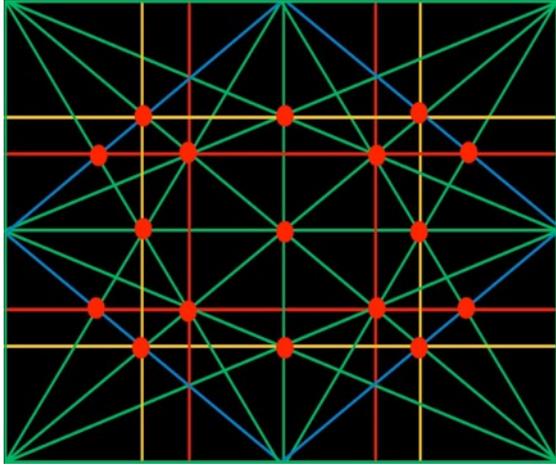
The Geometry of Composition

Composing a painting introduces a balance of several factors. Pythagoras's (570 to ca. 490 BCE) Armature of the Rectangle has been central to it, and as important as tuned instruments and harmony are to all Western music.

The 'Rectangle' of lines shows all potential lines and points of power and harmony (left), however only a chosen few of those are used in a single painting, as in the works of Vermeer, Caravaggio and De Ribera (right).

The scale of the figures determines their effect, and

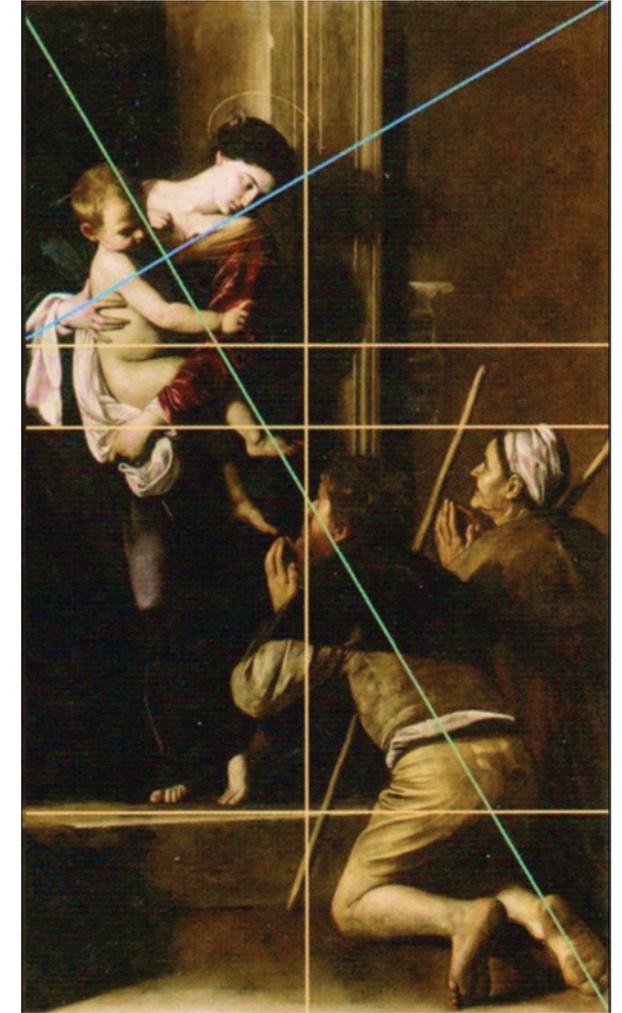
I favor heads set at 8.5 to 9.0 inches in height, which creates the intimate and philosophical air that I prefer in these paintings. I must 'tune' the composition by moving the figures onto Pythagoras's lines, without either losing the original choreography of the design, or altering the scale of the figures.



Vermeer 1668



De Ribera 1639



Caravaggio 1603-05

The Geometry of Composition

Because of the compact and jostling nature of the composition in *CROOKED LUTE*, the use of the Armature is unusually complex, which is not ideal, but it does appear to work in this painting.

The eyelines and the point between the eyes and down the noses of both figures – are all on power lines, as well as the significant note that the man is in the process of revealing. Also the unexpectedly straight line of the man's right side, and the woman's raised upper leg, both follow Armature lines.

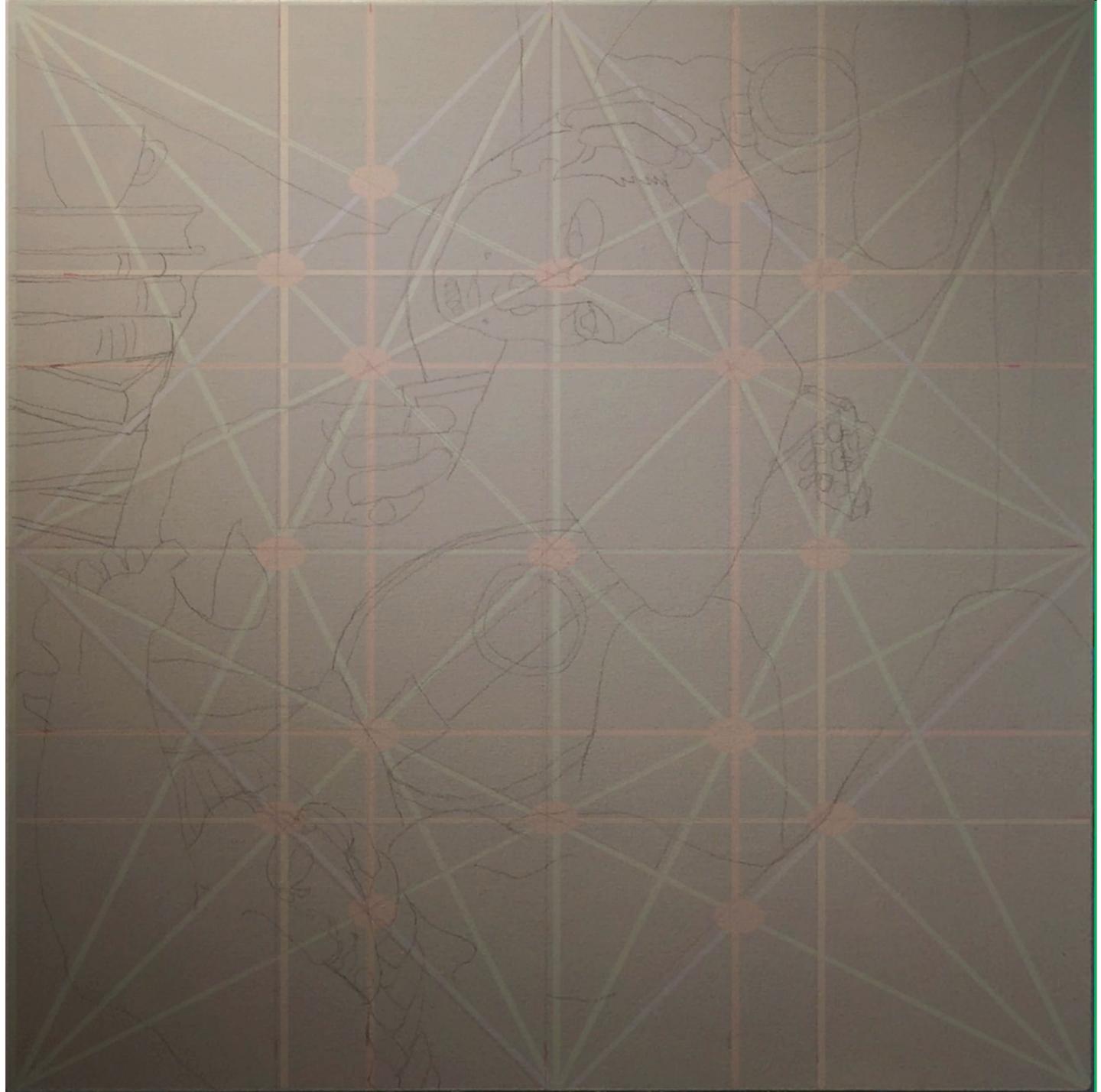


Crooked Lute, 2018

Transferring the design

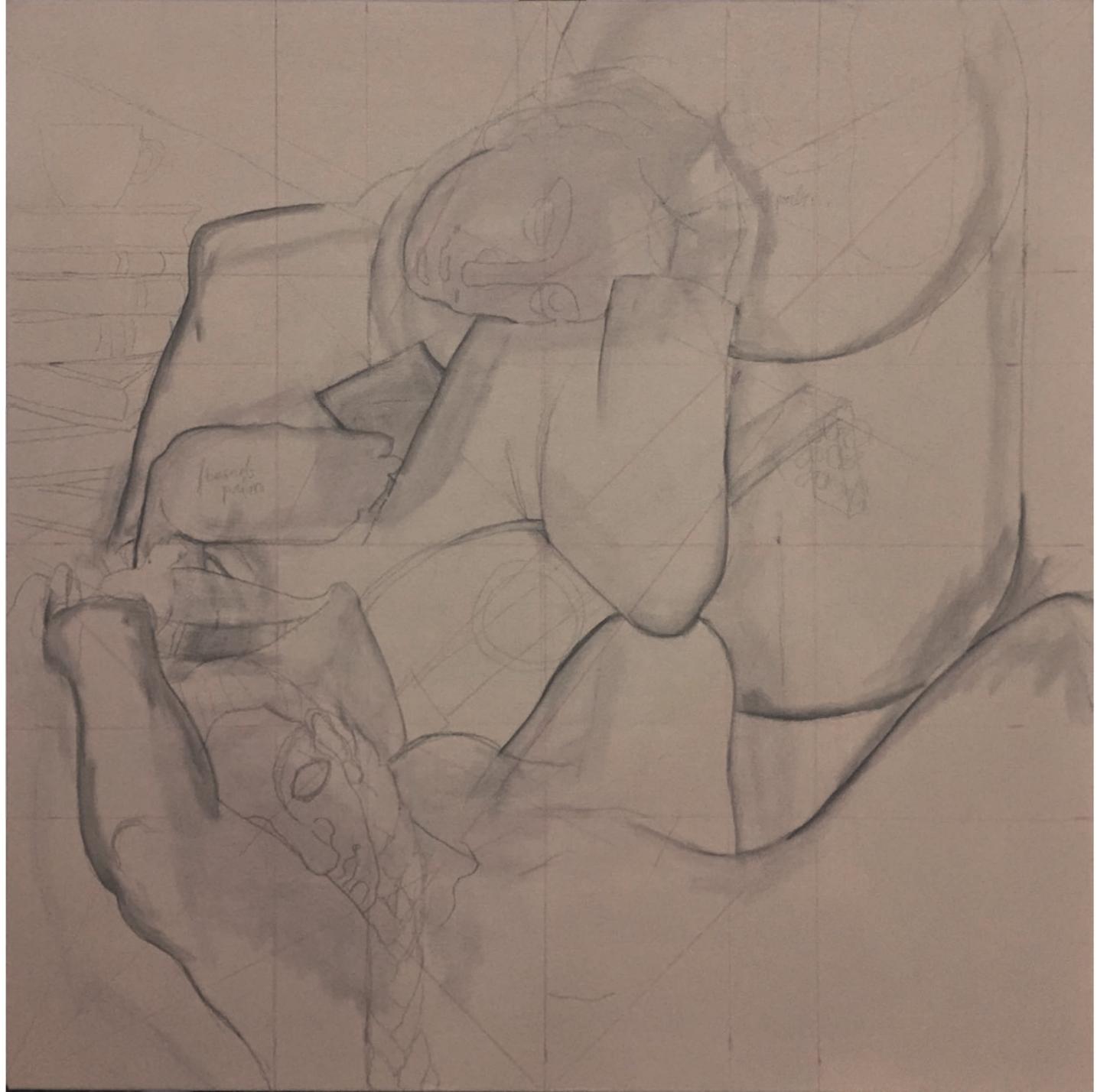
At this stage I laid the whole Armature over the composition (I have ghosted a clearer armature over the design to make it more visible here).

I could straightaway see how I would have to adjust the figures to bring them into 'tune'.



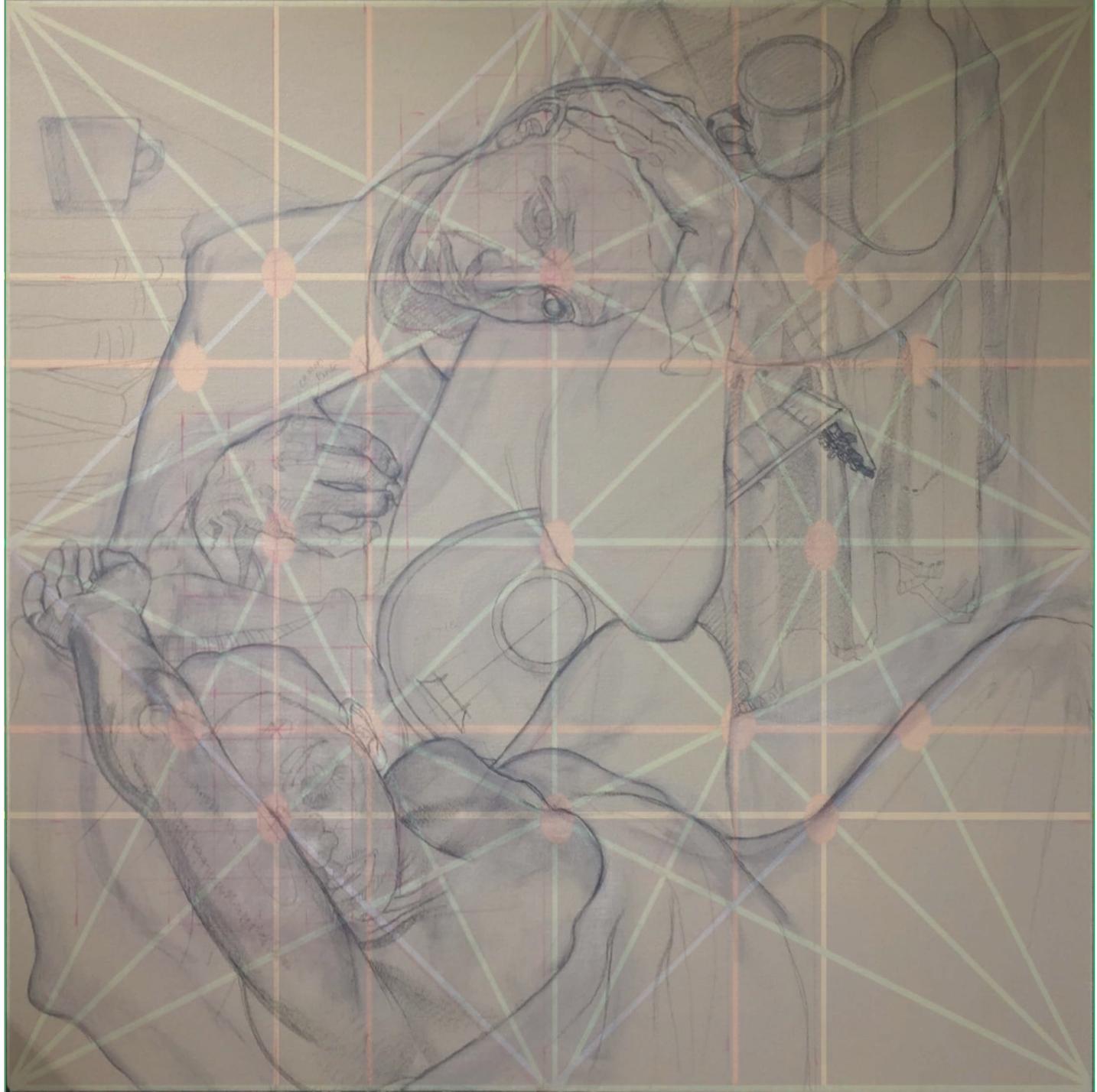
Transferring the design

The design was then adjusted quite radically to fit into the Armature power lines and points.



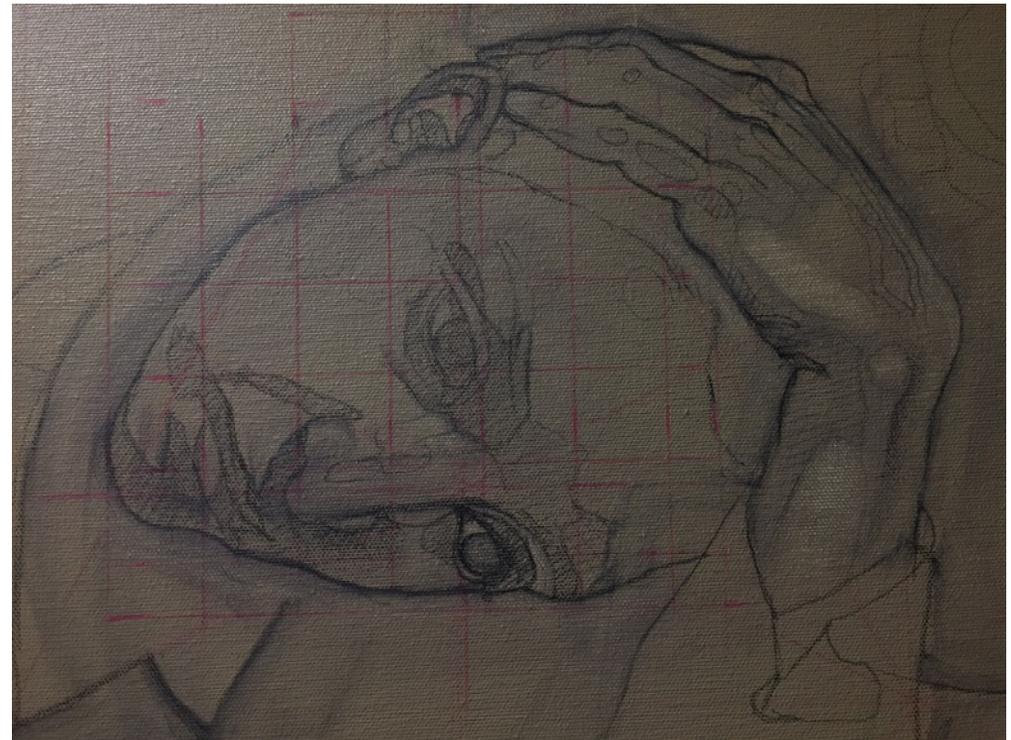
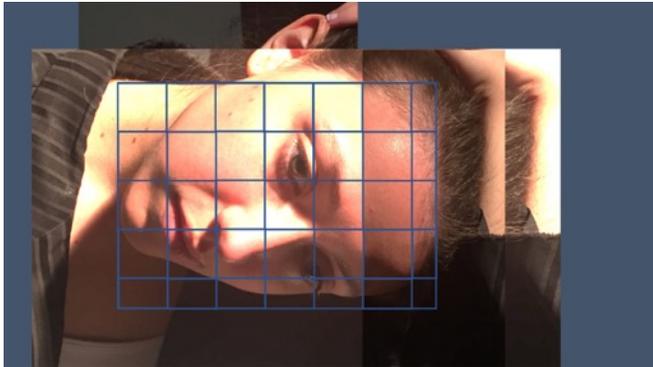
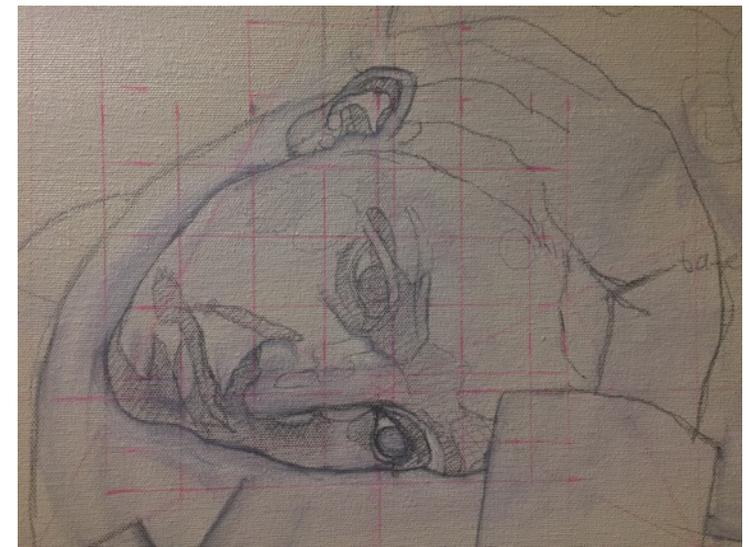
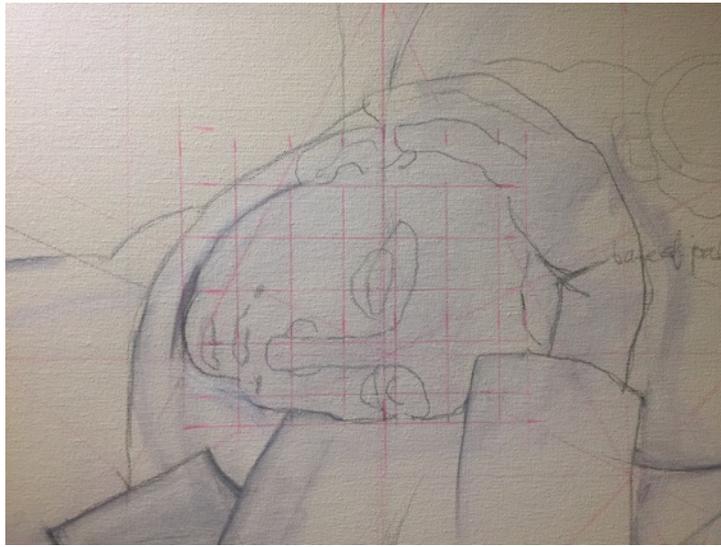
Transferring the design

At that point it could be drawn into, perfecting the forms and laying areas of tonal shifts.



The under-drawing of the man's head and top hand

The head and top hand had to be transferred, along with the tonal topography, but it had to be kept locked onto the power points of the Armature.



The head was shortened for effect, mainly in the forehead. It was then squared and transferred using dark and light study photographs of the model Gwendolyn Vaughan, to avoid losing information in the shadows or the bleached lights.

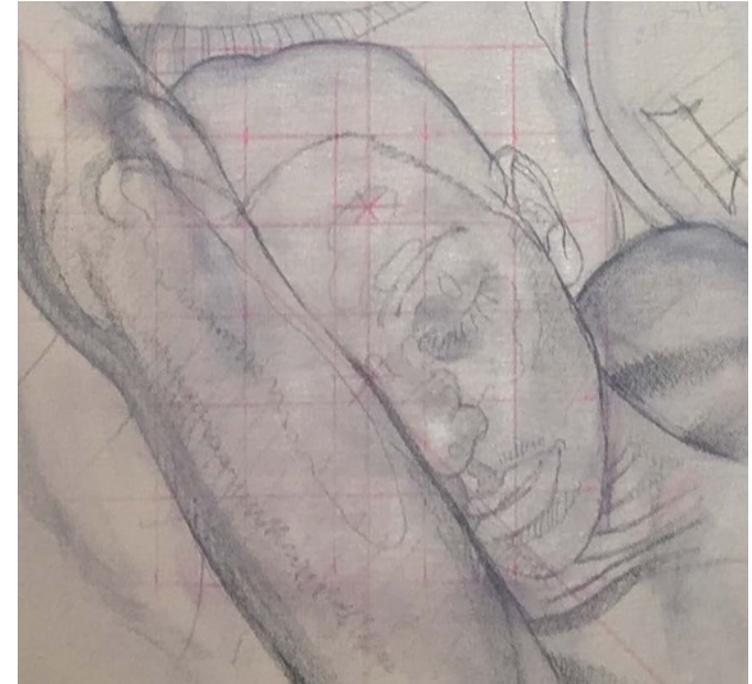
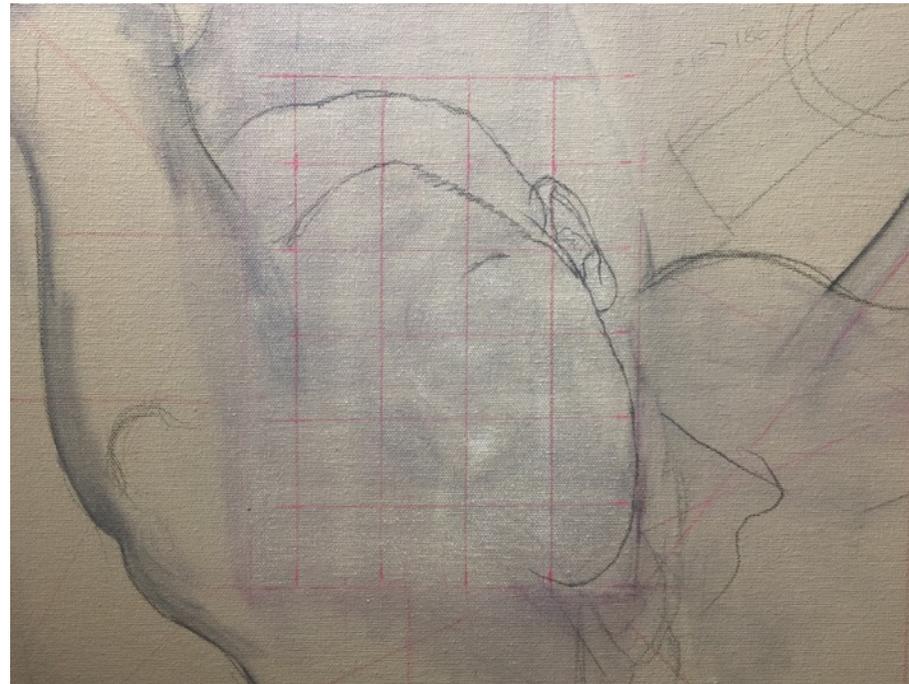
The under-drawing of the woman's face



The woman's face was completely drawn at least twice, building it into the arm correctly, and the arm was assembled from three different photographs from three slightly different angles.

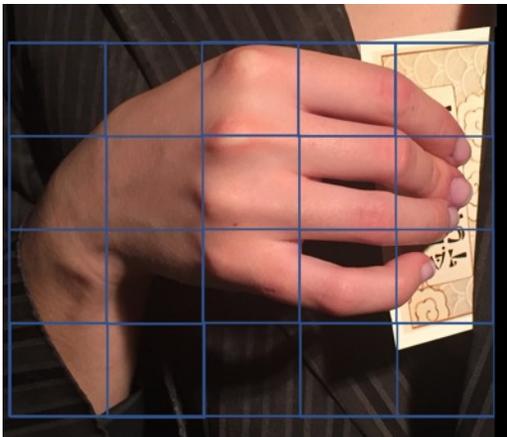
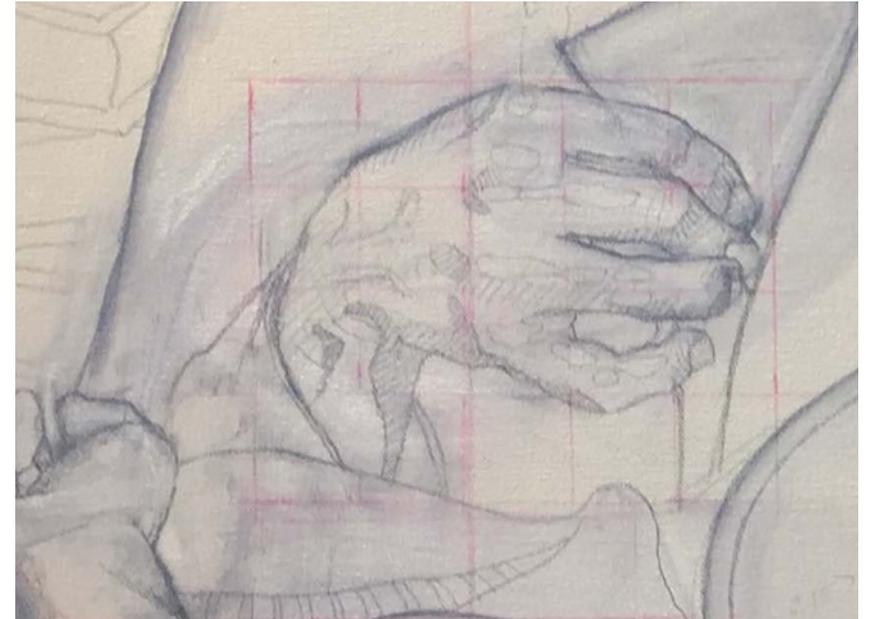
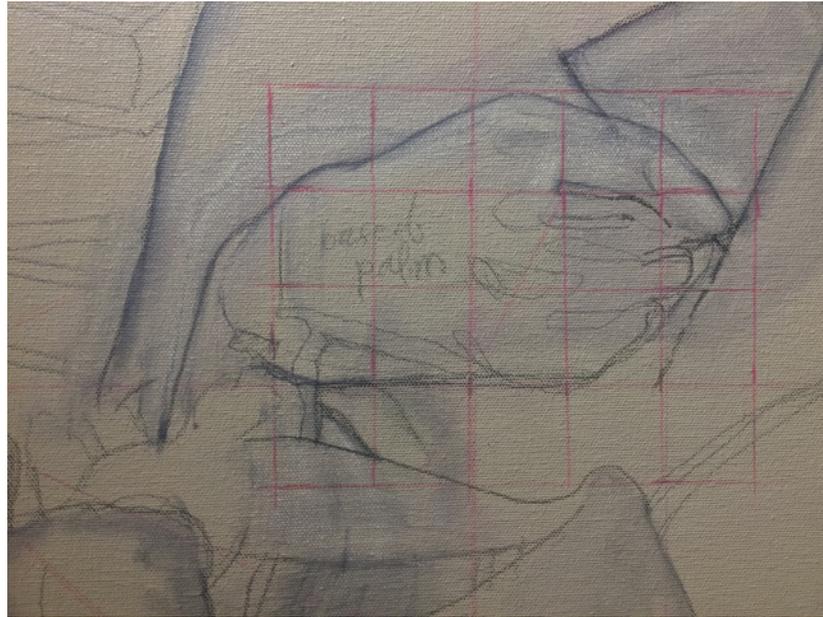
The model was photographed in Florida on a specially arranged trip from Louisiana, where the work was painted. Gwendolyn Vaughn is an excellent model, and she was carefully posed with Tolar Schultz handling the lighting and correcting the costume and hair as was needed.

'Gwennie' was coached in her facial expression, and even in what to think about, as she was posed, so that the muscles of her face would respond to the circumstances of the original event in 1976 with Mehrangis Mahboubian – the Persian refugee.



The under drawing of the man's lower hand

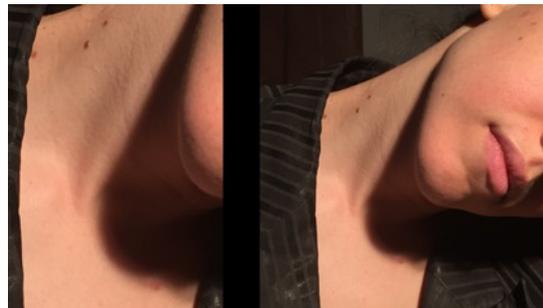
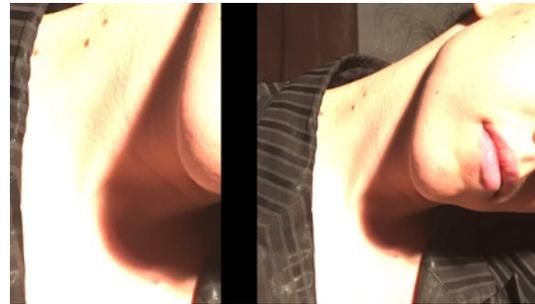
The 'man's' lower hand was posed carefully with the model, and lit so as to graze the back of the hand with light, revealing the veins and ligaments. The wrist joint was subtle and complex, but the back of the hand, whilst still subtle, revealed a host of information including bones, ligaments and veins. These were brought up by increasing the contrast in the study photograph of the model.



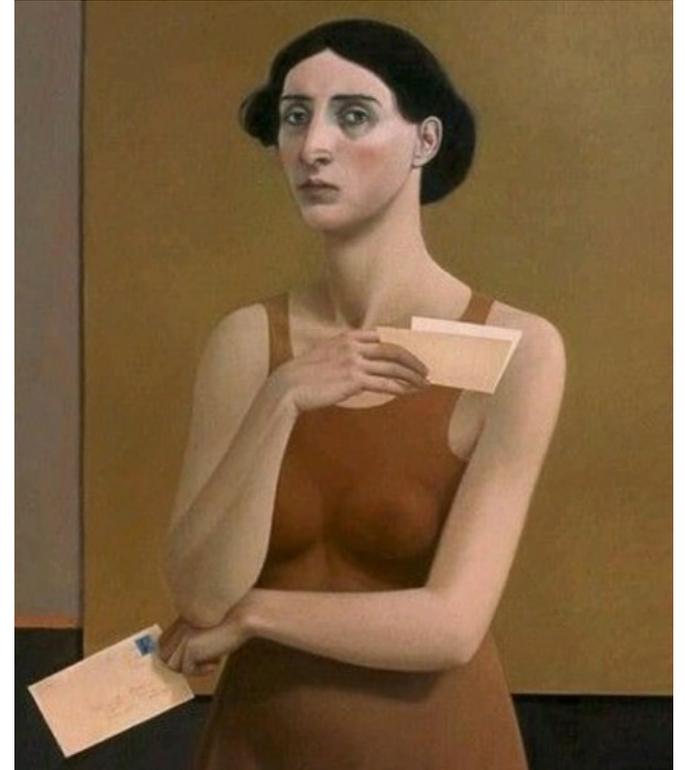
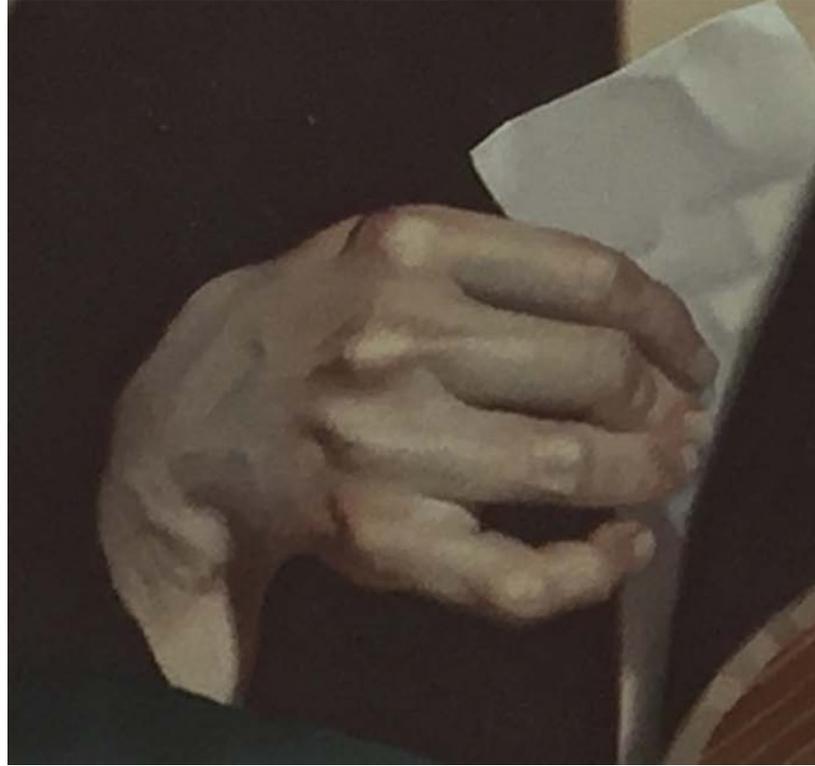
The painting of the man's head

The man's head was enjoyable, and was the first time that I used Raphael's flesh-painting technique whilst introducing the blood-filled areas at the same time. I had learned previously that once the tonal areas are laid in, they cannot be made sufficiently red for the lips and ears. Later the 'blood glaze' is added, bringing warmth into the skin.

The neck and chest once again involved study photographs with different levels of contrast, the light one to reveal the topography, and the dark one to show the real tonal values. The whole task is sufficiently laborious, that modern technology lends at least one time-saving insight.



The painting of the man's lower hand



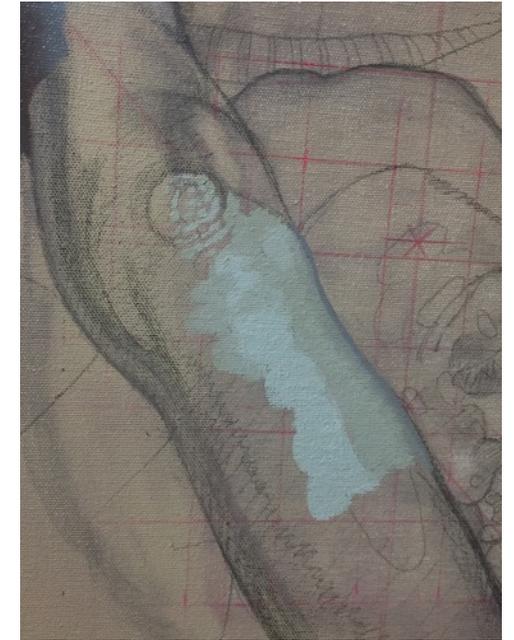
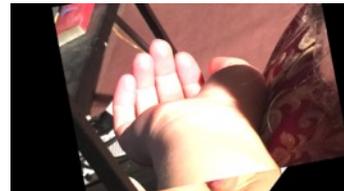
The man's lower hand was also adjusted in its method, from all the paintings up to this point. The warmth of the knuckles was laid in from the start, but then considerably added to with the 'blood glaze'. I like this hand very much, and the mysterious note that it holds. My friend Alan Feltus, one of the world's finest symbolist painters, and who lives in Assisi in Italy, was almost certainly an influence in the inclusion of the inscrutable note. Alan and I appreciate each other.

Por Amor Al Arte
2013
Alan Feltus

The building of the woman's arm

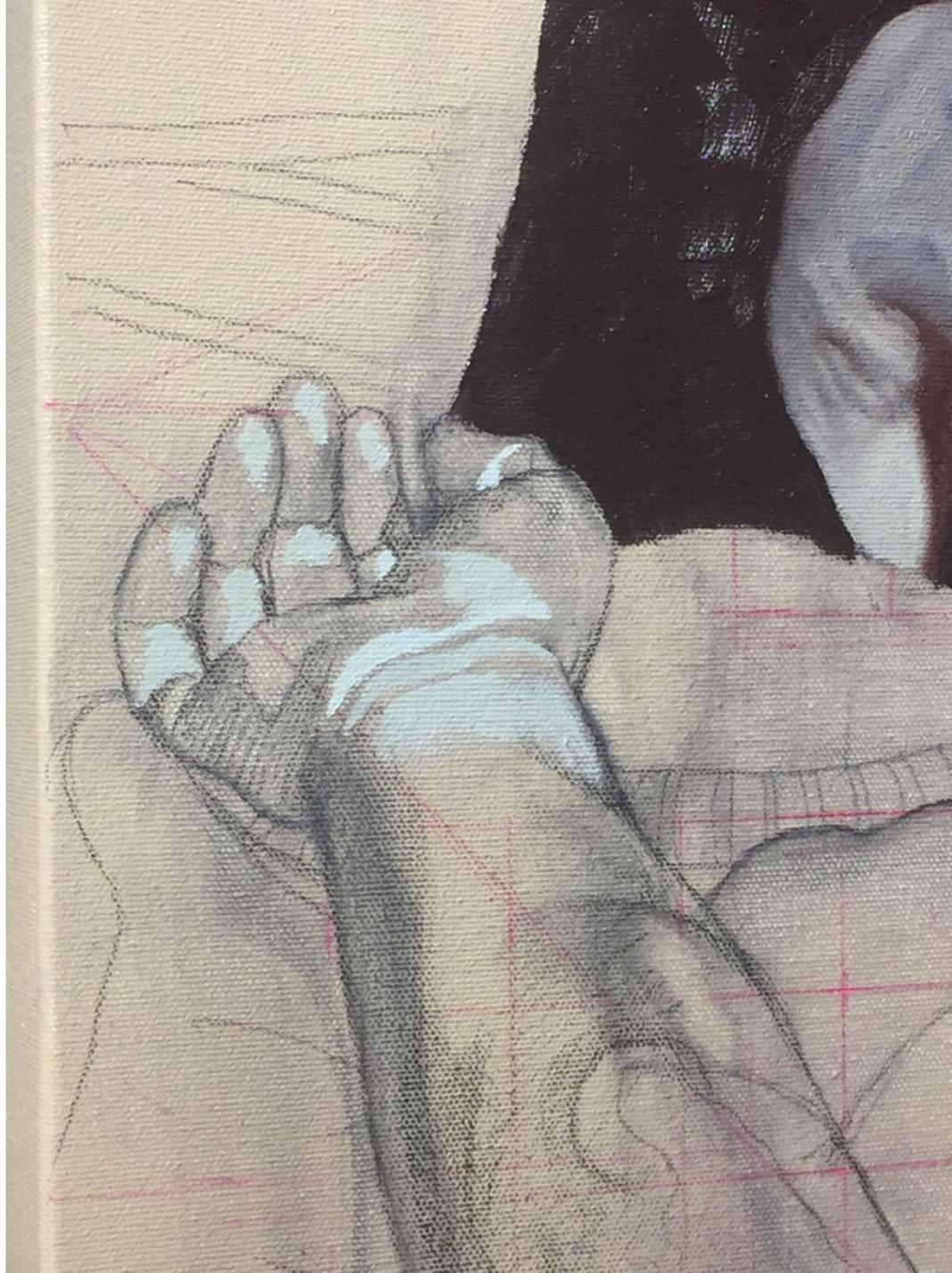
The arm and hand of the woman were complicated to build, because I wanted the deep perspective squashed, so that the hand was not too small. If it was photographed from the model too closely, the elbow would be huge and the hand tiny. The only way was to have the camera across the room and zoom in. But even still the arm had to be rebuilt, so as to connect with Pythagoras's power lines, and also to look convincing.

It took 12 study photograph montages, an analysis of Raphael's flesh-painting method in the *Ansidei Madonna* altarpiece, and about fourteen hours spread over two days – to work out the arm, armpit and hand.



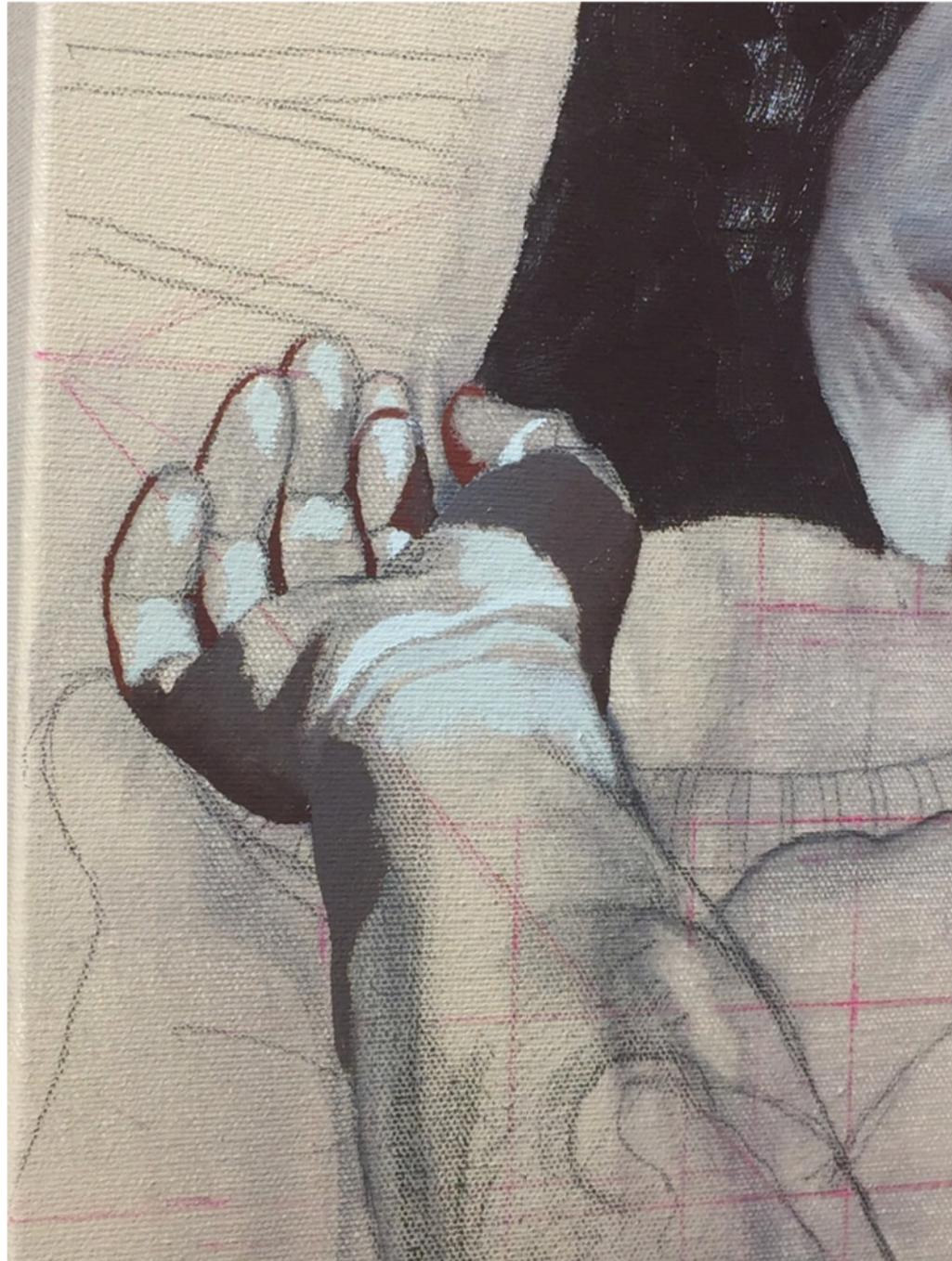
The painting of her hand

Highlights first, fading into lights.



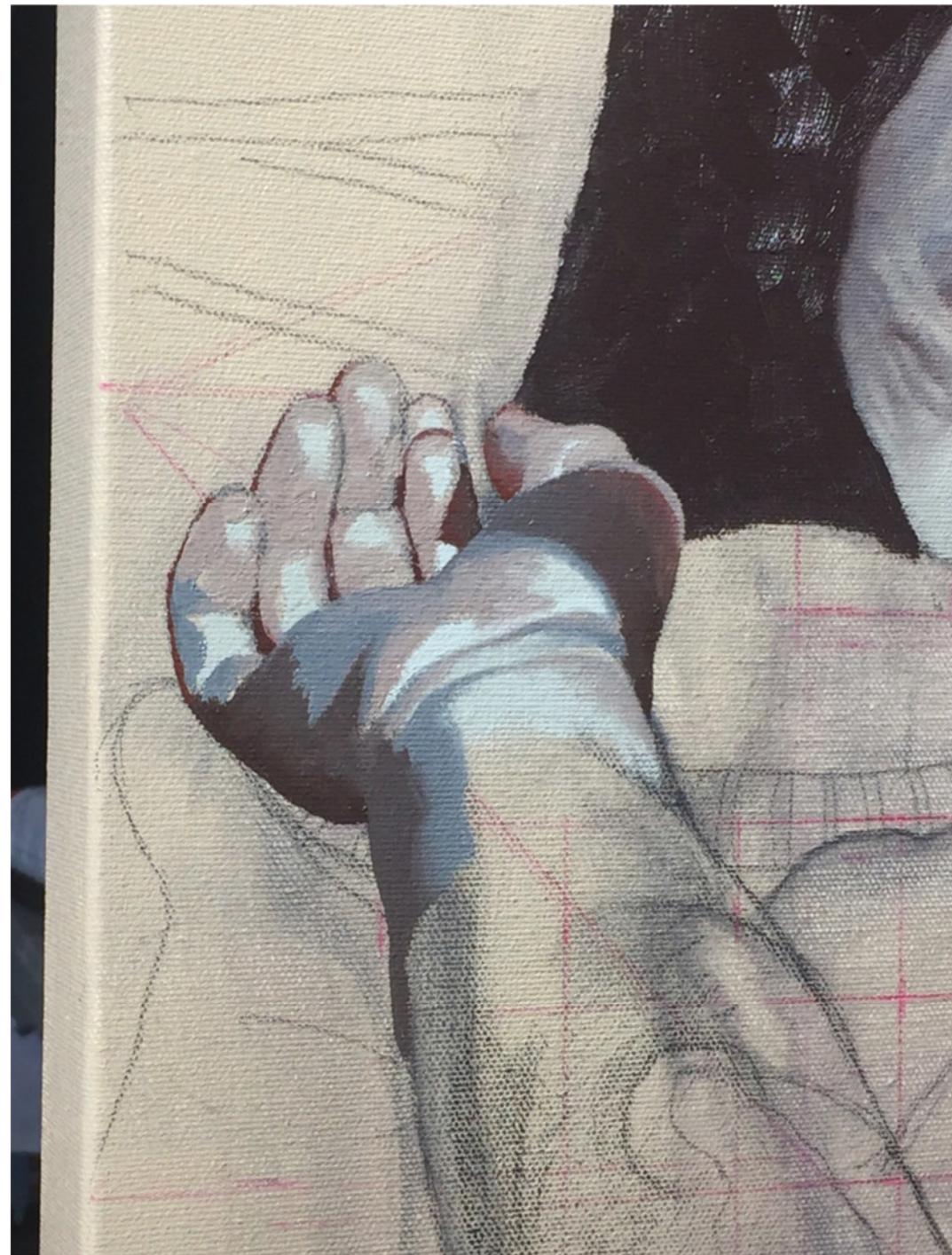
The painting of her hand

...Then the hot edges and cracks, and the cold darks.



The painting of her hand

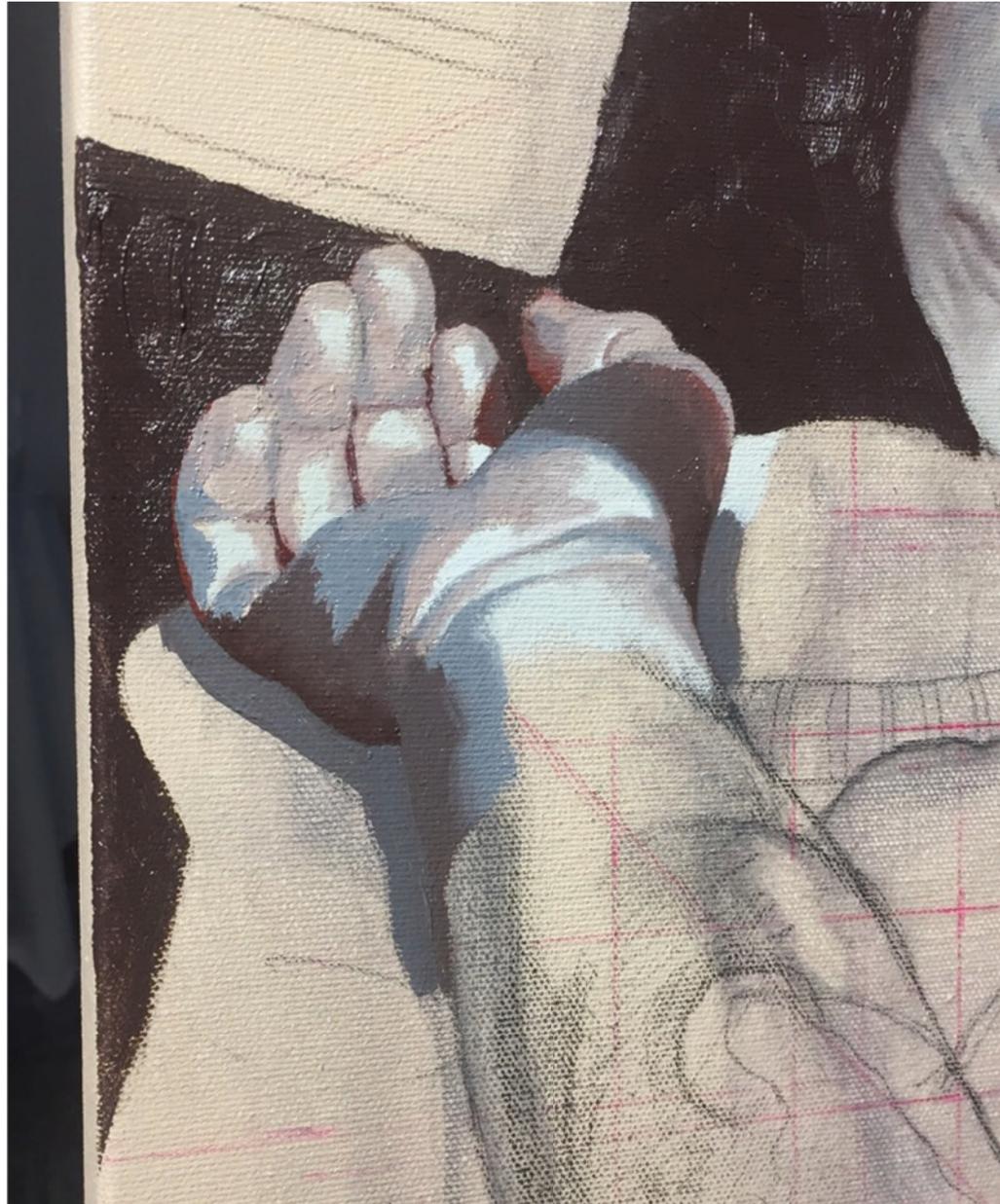
...Then the main areas of lights and light shadows blocked in.



The painting of her hand

...But before the hand colors could be blended, all the surrounding areas had to come into the hand, so as to soften and blur some of its edges.

At this point it is covered, but frankly, the colors do not look as if they would make a convincingly realistic hand. But the blending and shaping is to follow.



The painting of her hand

...Blending done, and ribs in the finger pads.



The painting of her hand

Seeing the two hands together was helpful, including the woman's arm and veins in her wrist. The 'blood glaze' was still to come.

There's a disparity in the sizes, partly explained by one being a woman and the other a man, but here is where the impossible perspective of the painting – one of its biggest achievements – comes to a limitation, thankfully not distracting in the overall effect.



The painting of her hand

When the surrounding books, pillow, hair and inscrutable note are all fleshed out, the discrepancy fades into insignificance.



The figures' hair



In this concept of combining Early Renaissance flesh painting, Dutch Golden Age fabric, crockery and paper, and Cubist perspective, the hair of the figures becomes a problem. It is mysterious as to why, and so I can only suggest an explanation.

First, problem or not, I need the hair to act as a block of color that speaks nicely at odds to the overall rhythm of color in the paintings. It can sometimes be shown as a single block of color, which works when the hair is 'black'. Any lighter color than that requires architecture, which, not having black to consume its

details, leads us to question the lack of information which we find in the crockery, fabric and paper.

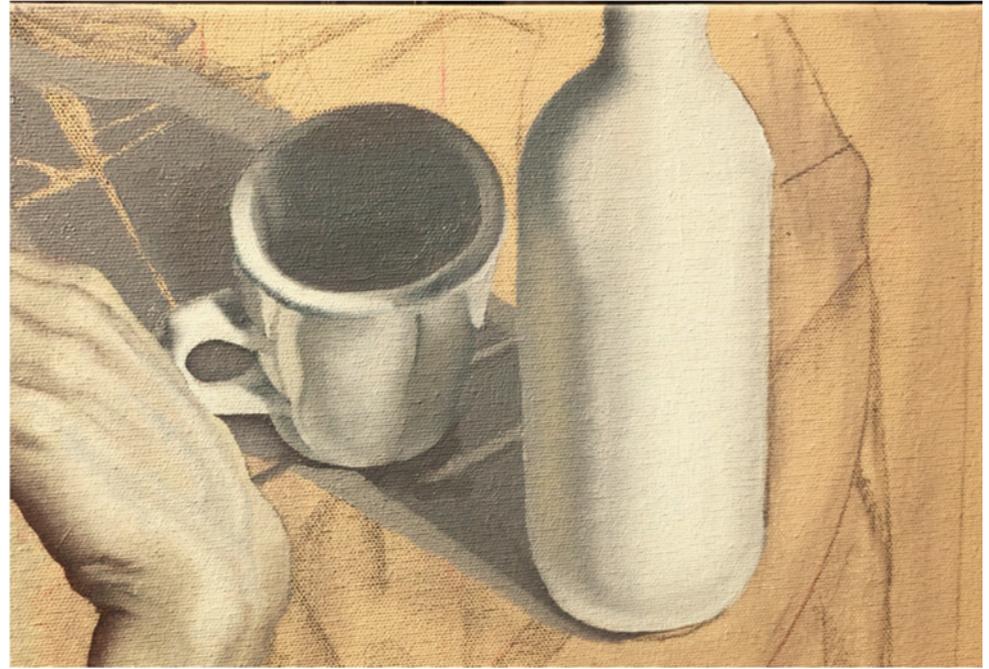
But either hair must be painted fully, almost to the individual hair – which for some reason sits badly with the rest of the painting and suggests some kind of Photo-Realism. Or it must be suggested in an Impressionist way, which again sits at odds with the painting, and introduces a whole new style of painting into the picture. I find a moderate halfway house, but as of now, no solution is entirely satisfactory.

The Crockery

The pieces are set up and lit according to the final arrangement, based on the original page 14 design adjusted according to the Armature.

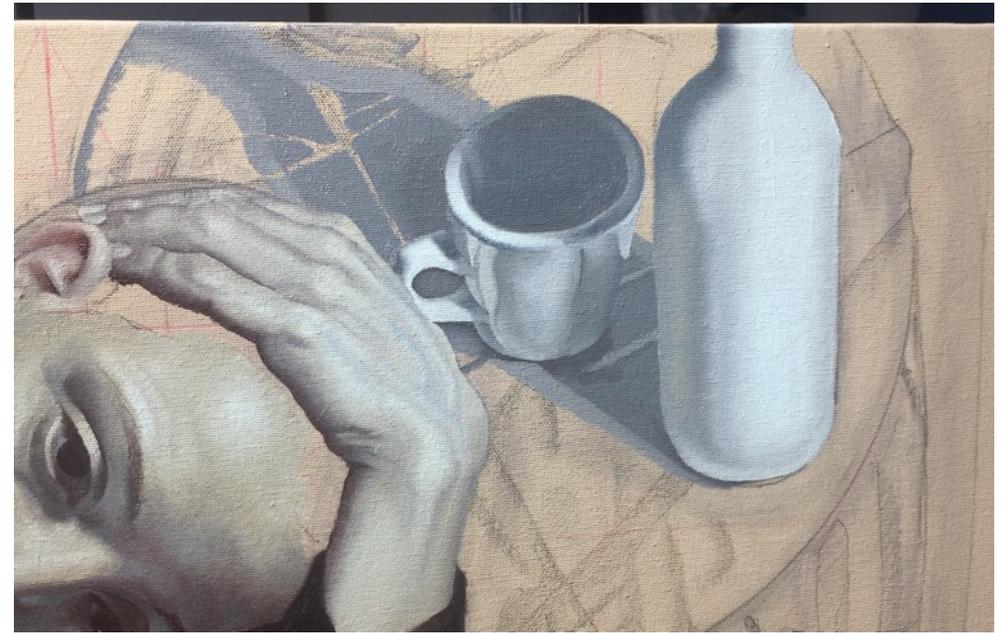
The mouth of the cup is enlarged to provide the Cubist combination of two views of the cup: virtually a full profile and an almost full aerial view.

The crockery and cloth colors are the flesh colors with only one higher 'light' color of peppermint white. The highlights in the crockery are added at the very end.



The Tablecloth shadows

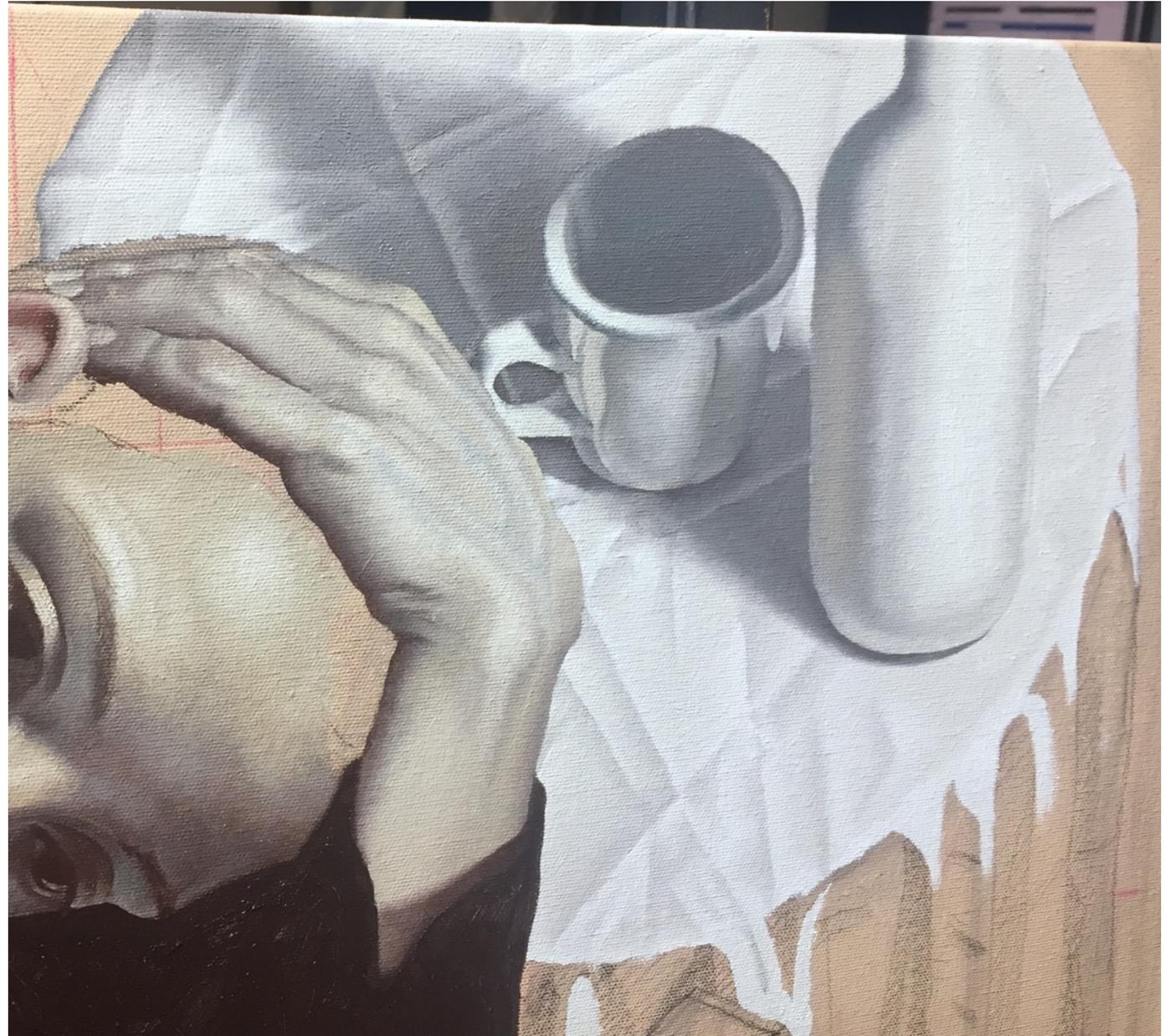
The crockery must be lit to produce the right kind of shadows, and then photographed from the right angles. They are constructed from a limited tonal range, with increasingly blurred edges – the further they get away from the crockery. Then the rest of the table top is built around those shadows.



The Tablecloth top and edges

With my Cubist goals for the table, it has to be photographed from the top, from the sides, and from 45 degrees, showing all facets. These are then rebuilt.

The table cloth surface is complex, and I have to pay attention to the light source direction, and whether a crease is up-standing or down-standing. The same color architecture is used on the cloth as on the flesh, with peppermint highlights and khaki lights, blue gray shadows, blue-green gray dark shadows, and rare dark brown cracks.



The Tablecloth sides

The sides of table cloths are sufficiently complex that I have to place tape markers on the study photographs, and place identical markers on the painting, to guide me to the little piece of topography that I'm reproducing.

I like table cloths that are ironed to produce lines – like the table cloths which laid before me as I ate my meals at home as a child. I also like badly hemmed table cloths, which make more interesting puckers. Generally my mother's hems were better than these.

I constantly have to guard against using too wide-a tonal range on the cloth. Often the tones of the colors are so close that they are hard to differentiate on the palette



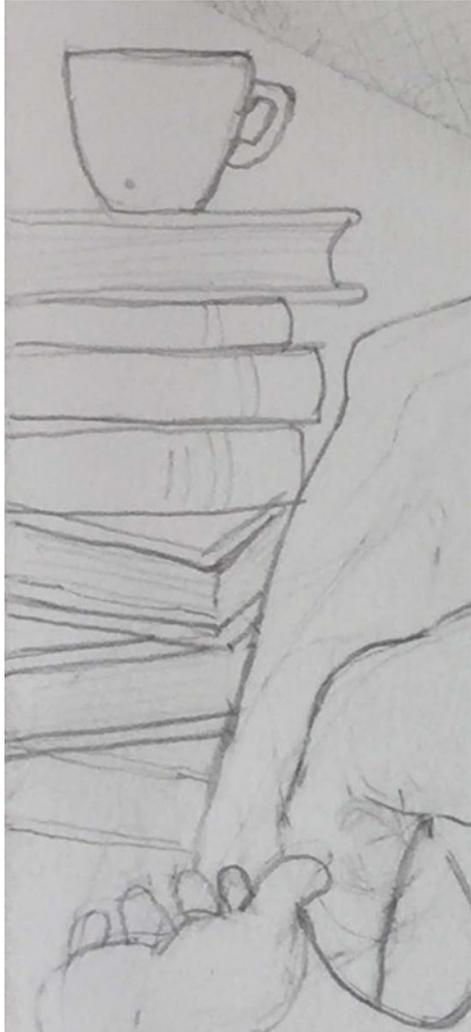
The Books

Tolar Schultz and I went to a second hand bookstore with a camera, the cup, design and a workshop lamp. We found the right thickness of books, with no covers, and with nice edges and roughly appropriate colors.

We then hastily set up the books, following the design for their layout, reproducing it as closely as we could, and with Tolar holding the lamp as correctly as possible, I took perhaps ten images, nervously in the back of the store.

The book arrangement as it is seen:

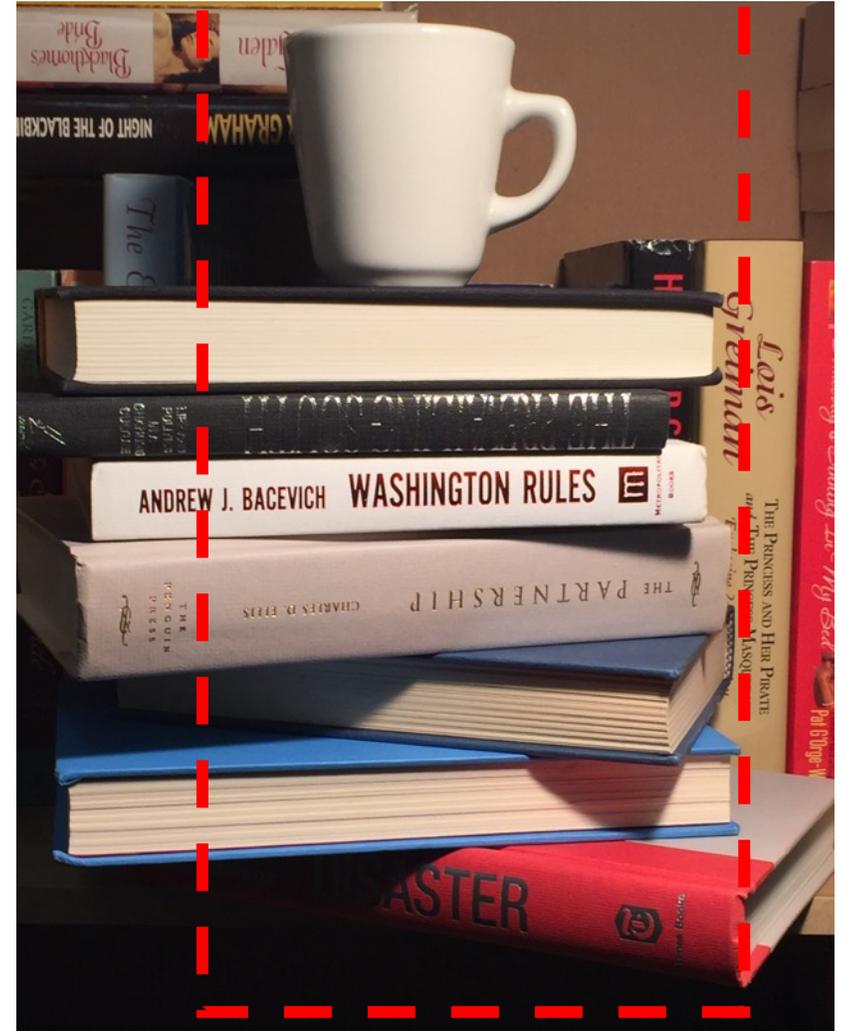
In the original design.



Transferred onto canvas.

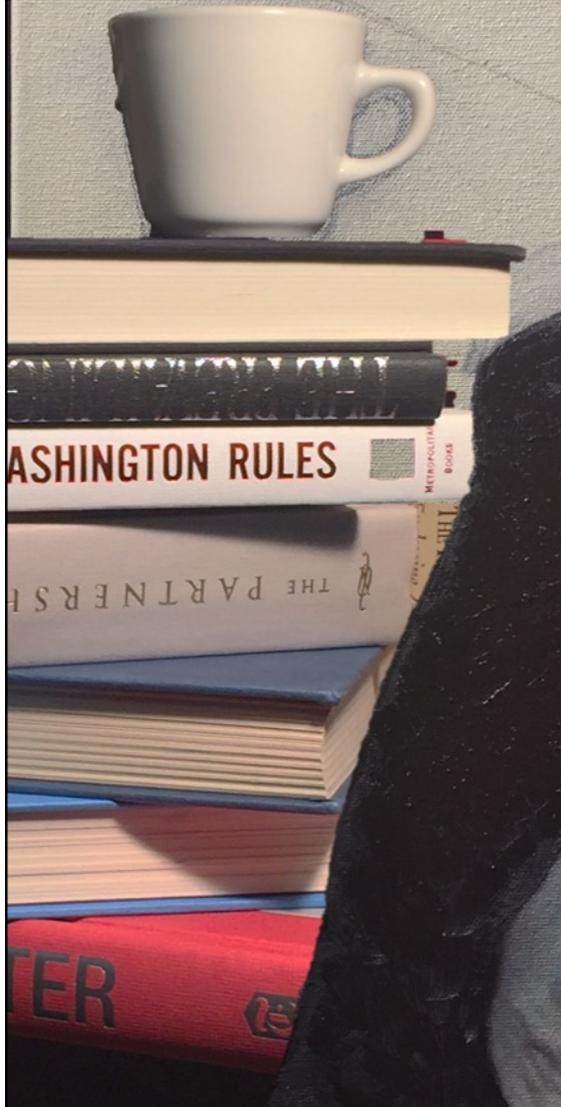


Reproduced in real books in the bookstore.



The Books

In the four stages below, you can see the computer mock-up combining the painting and the second-hand bookstore study photograph. Then the books basically painted using all the flesh palette. Next the titles added on the spines, and information in the paper. Finally a series of glazes and a shadow added, falling from the lute player. I needed the books to sink back into the painting comfortably and smokily. They are support actors.

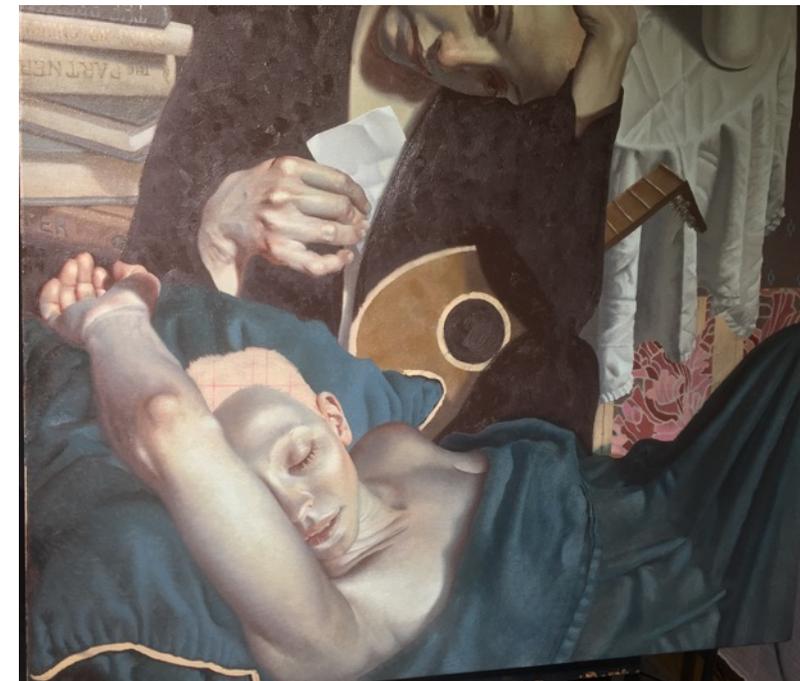


The Bed – step 1 - building the cover

The intended color for the bed cover was, right from the start, a dark and oily 'petrol blue' (green blue). I wanted to paint the cover much lighter, enabling me to create plenty of architecture in the fabric, and then glaze it down to the desired color.

This was very laborious, and took several heavy glazes followed by numerous adjustments.

When I painted the pillow I did it in solid colors instead, which doesn't show to the cursory glance, but on closer inspection, you can see it.

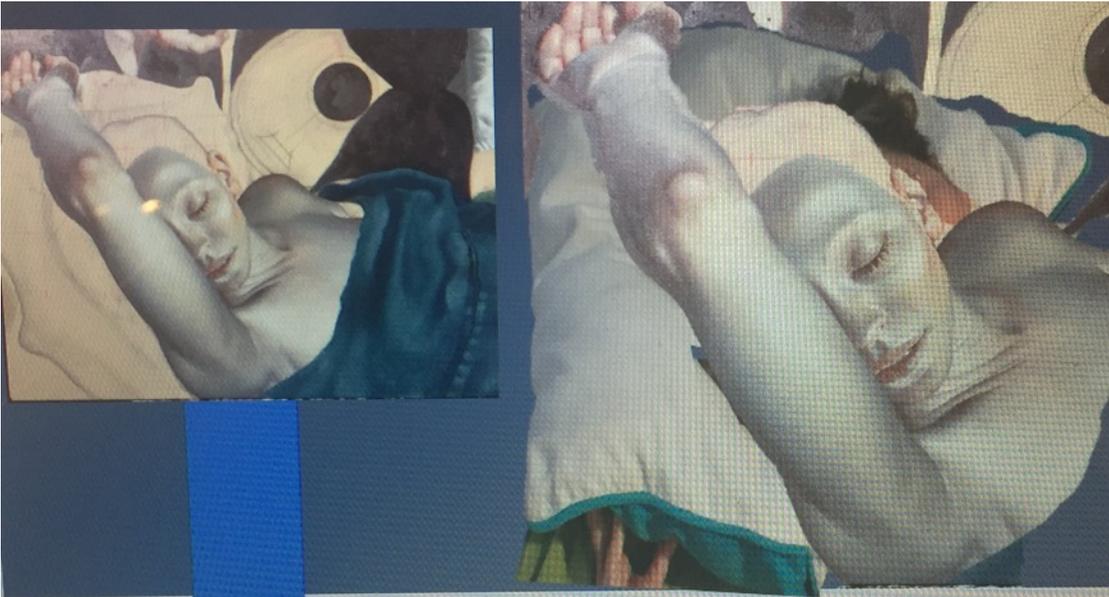


The Bed – step 2 - building the pillow

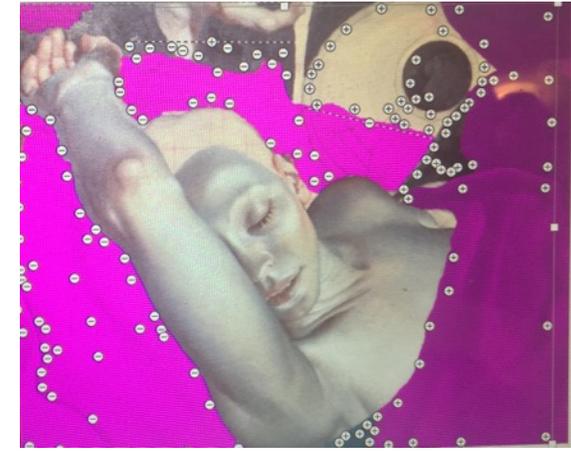
I did this process with the bed cover also:

- 1 I photographed Tolar Schultz posed to create the desired folds for the pillow, using a handy pillow.
- 2 I then photographed the waiting space in the canvas where the pillow must be built, and digitally hollowed out the spaces, making them transparent.
- 3 I then crammed the photographed pillow into the space...complicated.
- 4 And then painted the pillow from the resulting model

3



1



2

4



The Bed – step 3 - building the design

I had long wanted to borrow the design on the divan under the girl in *Spirit of the Dead Watching* (*Manao tupapau*) by Gauguin. After all, like him I spent years living in the hills of a tropical paradise among the natives, painting in my studio.

I had to extract the design, turn it on its side, compress it increasingly as it moved into the distance, and then run it over the topography of the already-built folds.

I glazed it several times afterwards to bring it into a connectedness with the cover.



*Spirit of the Dead
Watching*
(*Manao tupapau*)
1892

Paul Gauguin
Oil on burlap canvas
116.05 cm × 134.62 cm
(45.6 in × 53 in)



The Floor

I needed an ornate design for the floor, set against the several areas of the painting that are relatively simple – so as to make a balance. But I had the problem that I couldn't allow the complex floor design to compete with the color chord of the whole painting.

1. I defined the area of the floor, drew in the legs of the table and their shadows.
2. I then chose the fabric that I felt would serve.
3. I digitally slid this into place so that I could move it around, seeking a satisfactory arrangement of pattern.
4. I then painted it in, radically changing the colors of the original fabric.
5. After stage 4 (lower right) I had to glaze the floor to draw it into line with the red hair of the man and sleeping woman.

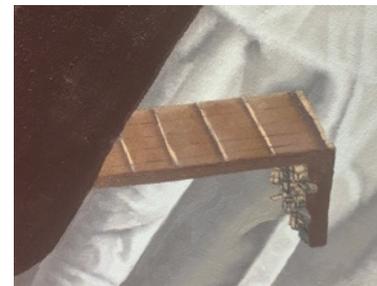
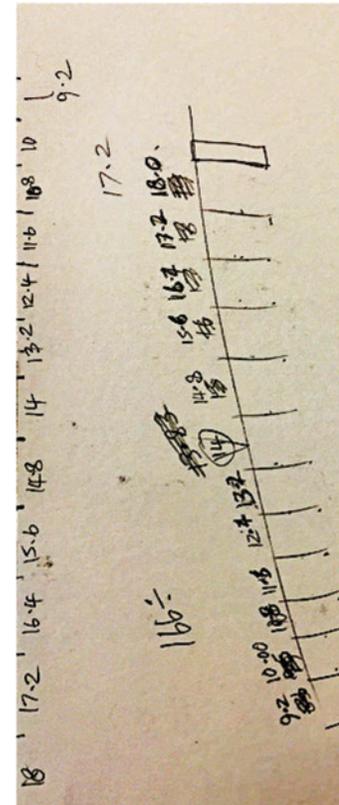


The Lute

The lute is completely invented, as a poetic accessory to the original idea of the Lodger and Serenading man. But it needs to have some elements of believability.

1. It is shaped and orchestrated so as to intentionally provide two vantage points, thereby mixing perspective in a mildly Cubist Escher-like way. It's then very basically painted.
2. The 'wood grain' is glazed on.
3. Then the tonal structure, given the light source – is glazed on.
4. The frets, pegs, nuts and tailpiece/bridge are all added, as well as the bone inlay around the sound-hole and body.
5. Then the math begins: calculating where the octave fret will be, and then calculating the placement of the reducing distance between the remaining 11 frets.
6. Finally, the distance of the strings is worked out, based upon there being 12 strings on this lute (they vary), set in harmonic pairs.
7. Finally the light glares are added to the 'shellac' of the lute.

The dead giveaway for those that are looking closely, (and it is always best to be honest in one detail, about the artistic fakery of an invention) is that there are 11 strings and apparently only 8 pegs.



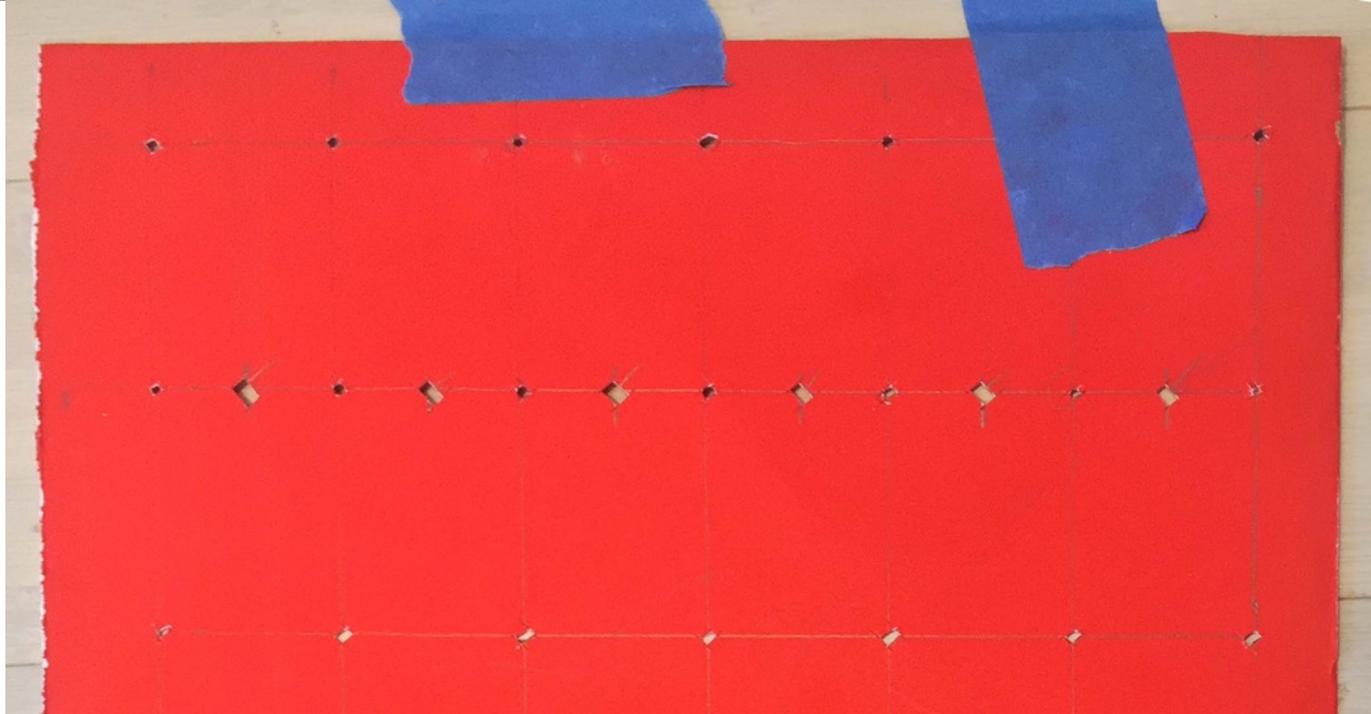
The Lute



The Wallpaper

I can no longer recall where I saw this minimal design of wallpaper, but it has been useful for me when I want to show the simply decorated plane of a wall. It is delicate and 'caring'.

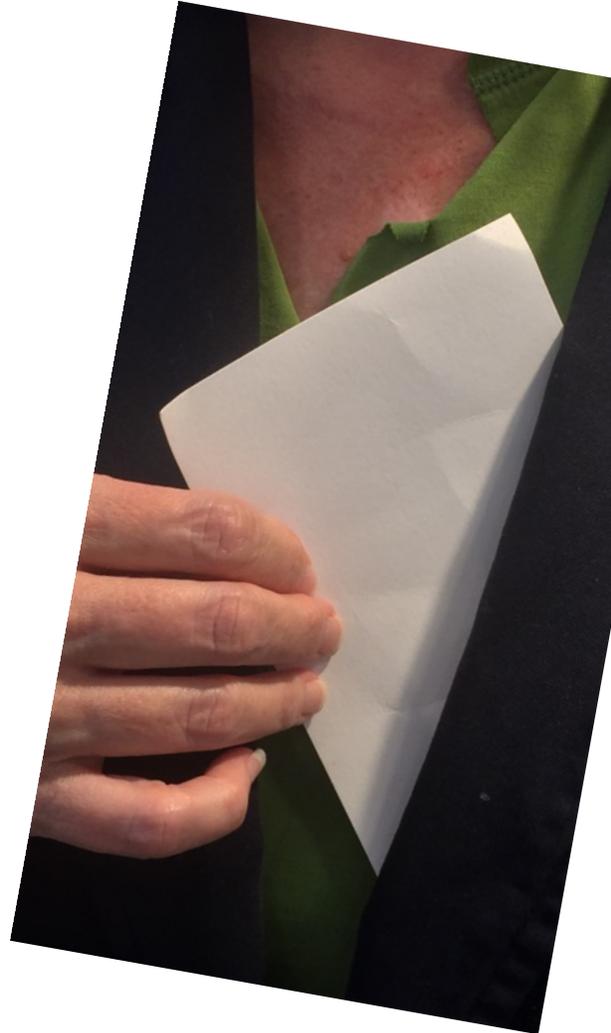
I cut a stencil with the exactly correct proportions for the particular wall, and then chalk the center-points of the pattern clusters onto the canvas, after which I am able to paint the patterns meticulously.



The revealed Message

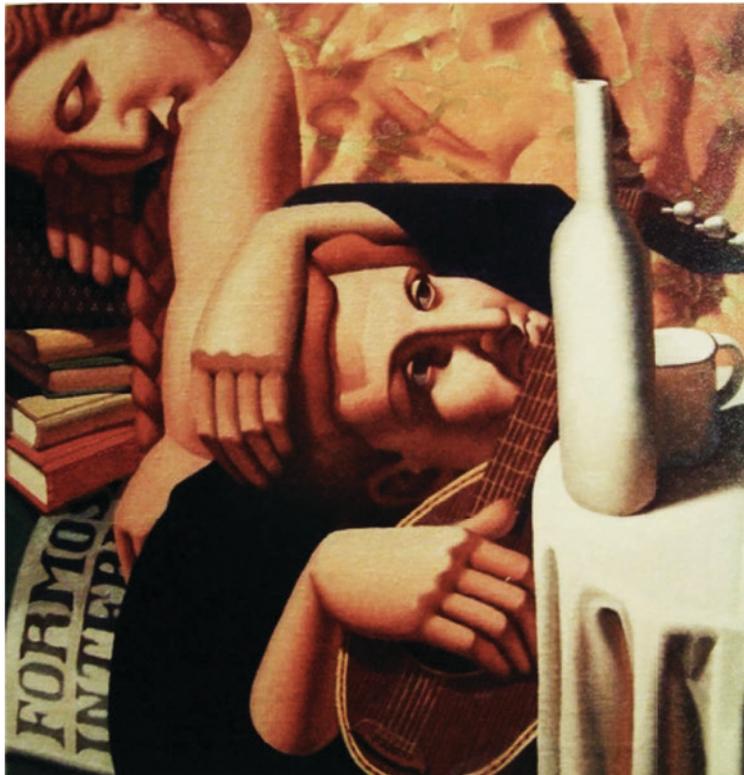
The message was never intended to be specific or prescribed. In fact there is a message on the reverse side, but I will never reveal what is written, because once it is revealed the possibilities end for the viewer. Their conjecturing and curiosity is rendered null and void by having heard the truth of the matter.

I always buckle paper like this, to introduce wear and tear, and also interesting challenges in its painting, as well as a sense of reality.



A Familiar Style

The original *Serenading the Lodger* painting (1999) employed the Cubist mixed perspective, flattened table-top and crockery, and the single plane of the jacket, but I used a somewhat Neo-Classical, stylized approach to the figures.



In 2018 I became frustrated with the figures, for their lack of humanity and vulnerability, finally settling on Raphael's flesh-painting method as a solution.

Then one month after finishing the *CROOKED LUTE* I realized why the Cubist perspective and Raphael flesh works so well and looks so familiar. The Early Renaissance church art of 1413 to 1460 appeared at the very beginning of Filippo Brunelleschi's and Masaccio's discovery of graphic perspective, and so perspective in art still lingered in a choosy world of alternating flatness and depth, but generally paintings dealt with interiors set in a narrow space. This is very much akin to the appearance of early Cubism, which in 1907 began to take art back towards flatness again, but now with sound theoretical reasons, rather than ignorance.

In the *Merode Altarpiece* of 1427-1432 (below) we see the flat table, strong tonal balance, abundant patterns and details, formalized hand gestures and sensitive flesh. Meanwhile the fabric and other surfaces are dealt luxuriously. The painting is also congested and comfortably composed.



A Familiar Style



Edward Povey, *Crooked Lute*, 2018, Oil on canvas.
Private collection in Santa Fe.



Follower of Robert Campin, *Madonna and Child with Saints in the Enclosed Garden*, c. 1440/1460, oil on panel, Samuel H. Kress Collection 1959.9.3

The Painting





THE PARTNER

WASHINGTON RULES

THE PREVAILED













Povey 118



CROOKED LUTE

2018

Edward Povey British artist 1951 -

Oil on canvas

30 X 30 inches/76.2 X 76.2 cm Signed and dated lower right

"When she finally sleeps it is time for him to silence the lute and arrange his feelings. Slowly withdrawing a future, already known and already written, he must live each day towards it - in peaceful ignorance of her fate."

These things of the future are not found in books or talked about over tea; and one day his memory of her will be only her quiet and gentle breathing."



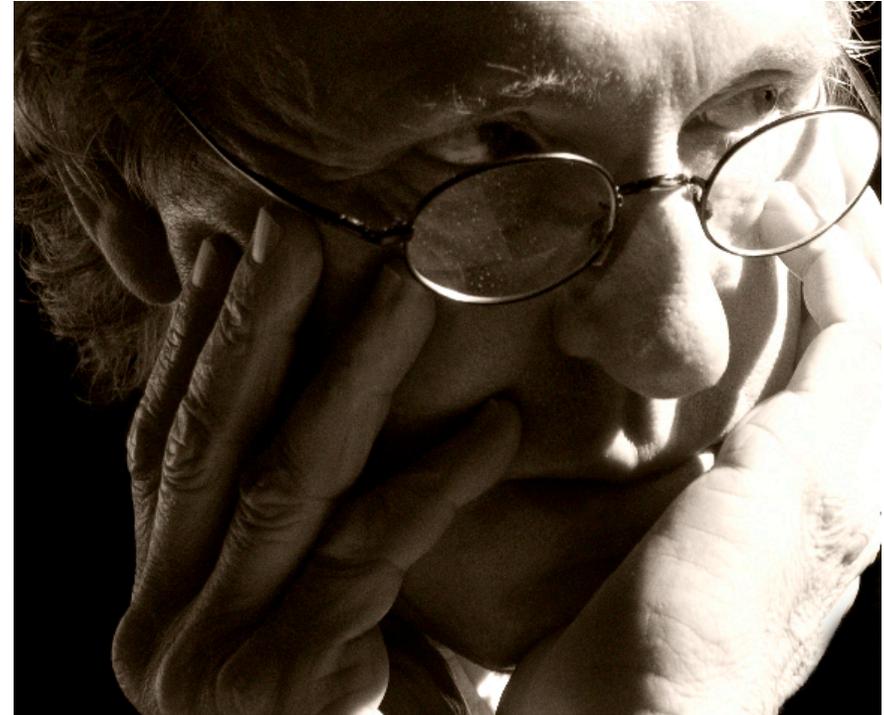
Edward Povey

The English artist Edward Povey was born in a faded suburb of fog and bombed buildings in the post-war London of 1951. He was the only child of a seamstress and a merchant seaman, and they lodged in the damp gas-lit home of his kind Great Aunt Violet. Edward's father was unusually handsome, but was also sadistic and dictatorial, unwittingly building a refuge of camaraderie between the boy and his loyal mother, from whom Povey inherited his cheerfulness and practicality. Delicate and talkative as a child, he drew and painted prolifically, deriving a comforting euphoria from art as a distraction from the palpable tension in his home.

After giving little attention to his high school education Povey worked for two years in London City as a race horse shipper's runner, now feverishly writing prose poetry and music whilst planning his emigration to Canada at the legal age eighteen. Canada was a great relief and liberation for him and brought him into contact with the Baha'i Faith: a *family of choice* with tenets that channeled his characteristically 1960s beliefs in love and globalism, and after a couple years of drawing and playing his songs in folk clubs, he returned to the arms of his former girlfriend in London, Vivien Alsworth whom he later married.

It was during a working summer in Israel with Vivien that he painted his first mural on the walls of a Kibbutz bunkhouse: a painting of Abraham and Isaac appropriately, while at night they laid on their cot underneath the painting, listening to the bombs falling on The Lebanon, and the Israeli planes returning overhead.

Their home on the South coast of England now provided Povey with his first studio, allowing space for more ambitious paintings of figures and townscapes. He enrolled for an Art Foundation year at Eastbourne College for Art and Design, and it was here that an enthusiastic professor introduced him to the profound experience of drawing, not based on formulas so much as intense seeing.



Povey's burgeoning tendency to figurative symbolism was out of favor with the anti-narrative Postmodern ethics in Art Colleges, so by age twenty-four he had begun a self-designed apprenticeship painting murals in Wales, which quickly brought him acclaim with the BBC and newspapers, and by 1981 he had completed twenty-five complex multi-story murals and had transformed areas of North Wales and England. During this six year chapter of his life, in addition to his murals he had written a novel, toured extensively with his band and done a four-year degree in art and psychology at the University of Wales. In the meantime Vivien had given birth to their two sons, Daniel and Thomas, and was already suffering from undiagnosed postpartum depression, which set against her husband's flirtatiousness, would unintentionally dismantle their relationship.

Whilst Povey certainly loved his wife and children, his creativity was all-consuming and intoxicating to him, often blinding him to more mundane responsibilities. He was without doubt a visionary and even a romantic, but these same qualities made him implacably stubborn and preoccupied.

The sheer scale of his 60 foot murals had excited Povey, but he became frustrated by the technical limitations which their size inevitably brought, and so he took his young family to the Caribbean island of Grenada, where for seven years he would work earnestly on canvases in a studio in the tropical hills. But within a year of their arrival a hardline communist junta drove the small island into war, and the Povey family were held under house arrest through a week of shoot-on-sight curfew. After hundreds of deaths, a sky filled with helicopter gunships and jet fighters, desperate Cuban soldiers, and bombed-out pajama-clad mental patients wandering through the streets, an uneasy peace was restored.

Povey deepened his knowledge, studying tonal composition with the Geometric Abstractionist Paul Klose, researching color in Belgium with art connoisseur Jan De Maere and with Malcolm T. Liepke in New York. Each of Povey's paintings began to require a solid month of meticulous drawing and writing in which he evolved and built compositions that were then transferred onto canvas using tiny squared grids. He combed over the art of Stanley Spencer and Tamara da Lempicka, always sure that if he thought more deeply and researched more broadly, that he could break through to a better way of showing the complex emotions of human beings. Living on a flow of commissions from his newfound American art collectors, in his whitewashed tropical studio his art inexorably gained maturity, while his marriage increasingly suffered.

Vivien left for England in 1987, followed two years later by Edward and his lover Joycie Hollingsworth - the sultry artistic daughter of a Californian professional gambler, and until 1992 Povey remained in the English market town of Guisborough, whose mayor had provided him with a studio. In the maelstrom of his divorce from both Vivien and the Baha'i Faith, Povey had

entered psychotherapy to deal with his unresolved childhood, yet ironically his turmoil deepened and darkened his paintings, improving them and attracting the attention of John Whitney Payson in New York, and the Madison Avenue art dealer Alex Raydon. He was now forty one, and was exhibiting beside Paul Cadmus, Walt Kuhn, Jack Levine and George Tooker.

In 1992 the University of Wales commissioned Povey to paint a 20 X 40 foot mural in a chamber concert hall. By this time he was dating Raphael Nicholson (grand-daughter of the abstract artist Ben Nicholson and painter Winifred Nicholson) who with Daniel, Povey's now 17 year-old son, helped him in the preparatory work for the piece. The mural took a year and contained seventy human figures struggling through seven stages of life, which he aptly titled *The Hall of Illusion*. As Povey's sons entered Oxford and Cambridge Universities, he returned to his friends in Wales, setting up an extensive studio courtesy of the University of Wales, from which he would depart on bi-annual lecture tours of his collectors in the USA.

Thanks to the media, Edward Povey's reputation now went before him. The president of the Welsh Royal Academy of Art personally invited him to join, he acquired collectors in twenty countries, his paintings hung in several museums, and he exhibited in reputable Galleries in New York, Brussels, London, Holland, Los Angeles, San Francisco and elsewhere. He was stimulated and productive in his work, and the obsessiveness that he had developed in his Caribbean studio - now resulted in each collection of his paintings containing its own unique intensity. At this time his father was dying of lung cancer aboard his launch in England. He had never acknowledged his son's career, and his dying wish was for bullets for his service revolver, so that his often-repeated threat of killing his wife and son might be fulfilled. After standing dry-eyed and profoundly confused at the cremation, Povey drove his mother west to Wales.

In 1993 he began courting, and later unenthusiastically marrying Alison Bone, the sister of an old band member from Wales; his paintings were discovering important new territory employing distorted postures to express

emotions; and in 1999 he began his friendship with the New Orleans art dealer Angela King, however his recent marriage was already disintegrating as his new wife contested Povey's obsession with his art.

By the time he met the Floridian beauty Tolar Schultz in 2003, he had already been changing his art in search of a more personal relevance, as he had at the close of his Mural Period in 1981. In Schultz he had recognized a soul who shared his artistic and philosophical concerns unlike anyone whom he had hitherto met, and from that point began their irresistible connection to each other. He rapidly divorced Alison; Schultz threw aside her previous career and began training in drawing, painting and sculpture; and they happily alternated between studios in Wales and Florida through the transition.

In 2006 Lady Anglesey, the former head of the BBC and the Chancellor of the school of the Art Institute of Chicago proposed to the British Government of Tony Blair that Edward Povey be considered for a knighthood for his services to the world of art. The following year the Welsh government presented Povey in a publication alongside Catherine Zeta-Jones, Sir Tom Jones and Sir Anthony Hopkins as the leaders of Welsh culture. Within another year the British Composer Jordan M. Leach had composed a seven part orchestral symphony dedicated to Povey and his *Hall of Illusion* mural.

By 2009 Povey and Schultz had built an elaborate home and studio in Austin, Texas. In the years that followed Povey returned to his childhood for material with sufficient gravitas to carry the experimental dark and figurative paintings of 2008 to 2012. Throughout this time he studied like never before, committed to carving his own route through the post-modern dilemmas of picture-making. He was joined in his inquiry by Schultz, with whom he gladly debated, writing voluminous manifestos, and in 2013 they embarked upon a combined artistic adventure. By now Schultz had become an accomplished painter herself, and they worked side by side on the same paintings, passing from concept to concept until their paintings of 2016 arrived at a destination:

a style that ignited some respect and discussion in the major New York galleries.

Between 2016 and 2018 the Povey and Schultz duo had made two collections of paintings each year, but they were both simultaneously reawakening the evolution of their own individual art, which had been paused in 2012. Refreshed by his creative sojourn with Schultz and inspired by new research in the National Gallery of Art in London, Povey alighted upon the idea of combining Cubist mixed perspectives with Early Renaissance methods of painting flesh. Through his demanding emotional life experiences, he still carried the undiminished vision of congruent cherishing in human relationships, now encapsulated in the motif of a man longingly serenading a sleeping woman through the night, lost in reverie.

This subject, employing Modernist strength and Raphael's tenderness, could answer his long-sought wish of creating a better way of showing complicated and vulnerable emotions. The art dealer Angela King offered Povey and Schultz an artists' residency at her river home in late 2018, and the peaceful isolation provided Povey with the perfect environment in which to shake the wrinkles out of his breakthrough.

By this time, Povey's now elderly mother had begun to fail, and so he and his wife Tolar Schultz moved back to Devon in England to join her. There they continue their profoundly authentic debate, studying and painting daily, deep in the English countryside only 240 miles from the site of Edward Povey's distant childhood in London.

THE LODGER PAINTINGS CHRONOLOGY

“In the beginning of course, I was gathering these things that I somehow recognized, without having any idea that one day they would form part of a whole that could be used in my art. In 1999 though, I had made an art card with a lovely image of the ‘Serenading The Lodger’ painting on it, and I carried that around, pinned it on my wall, and kept going back to it. It wouldn’t leave me alone. Finally I relented and became more conscious about doing something with this ‘sense of importance’ that I had around the painting. But recently I have realized that the components of the Lodger Paintings have all been slowly gathered over a sixty year period!”

Edward Povey 2018

- Age 7 As a little boy he would sit up to the dining table to draw, resting his paper on the ironed creases of his mother’s white table cloth.
- Age 19 Having emigrated alone to Canada, his apartment mate in Ontario above a jean factory, would tack huge sheets of paper to the walls and draw men wearing baggy black jackets with no shirts. For Edward, this somehow represented a civilized and kindly man.
- Age 21 At art college on the South coast of England he was taken under the wing of a young professor who taught him the art of intense seeing, and of translating scenes into drawings.



Edward Povey, 1970 in Brighton on the South Coast of England

- Age 25 A kind and radiant Persian refugee lodged with his young family in Wales, but was unable to sleep because of her anxieties about her brother who was imprisoned in Iran. Povey would sing to her through the night, calming her to sleep, hence ‘The Lodger’ and the lute.
- Age 26 His painting professor at college in Wales, the troubled but talented artist Selwyn Jones, taught him oil glazing over a period of four years, which subsequently became essential to his entire method of painting.

Age 32 In his studio on the tropical island of Grenada, he made designs with the flattened perspective of the Cubists, tipping up table tops against his picture surface and warping human figures.

Age 41 When he was painting the commissioned mural the Hall of Illusion for the University of Wales, he was assigned a small basement room for his materials, there he noticed the college's thick china cups and saucers, leaving with a set for future paintings.

Age 48 Shortly after the untimely death of the Lodger, he painted Serenading The Lodger in her memory: the first what would become a series.

Age 50 He began to include paper birds in his paintings after seeing one in the home of an art collector in Connecticut, USA.

Age 66 On a stay in Florida he found his first model for the second of the Lodger Paintings: the guileless daughter of a hermetic and peculiar family: Gwendolyn Vaughn. The second he found the following year serving in a café in Louisiana: the home-schooled and equally sheltered Katie Overmier.

Age 67 On a visit to The National Gallery of Art in London, he found The Ansidei Madonna by Raphael, and noticed the pale and vulnerable flesh of its figures, ideal for his Lodger Paintings.



Mehrangis Mahboubian (1947-1999) - 'The Lodger'

More than a half century had passed, and he was finally sure that he had all the ingredients of these paintings, with their quiet reverie and an undertone of tension, recalling his radiant but insomniac Persian Lodger.

After so many stages in the making of such a painting, and the introduction of so many skills and techniques, the painting then transcends both its technical 'birth', and its maker, losing all sense of the challenges that arose during its creation.

A painting then floats free, like a dream, a memory, a vision.

After so much work, the purpose of the painting appears: an immortal scene once conceived by a mortal.

In this case the man will always be in the process of removing the note from his jacket, and the contents of the note will never be known. The woman will always peacefully sleep, and will never awake. The lute will always be silent, and the cups always empty and waiting in the cool Welsh night.

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Edward POVEY

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