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ART, BIOGRAPHY, SEXUALITY:
PATRICK PROCKTOR AND KEITH VAUGHAN

IAN BRIAN MASSEY

**A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for Doctor of Philosophy**

The University of Huddersfield

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INTRODUCTION

This critical review forms a reflection on the research published within the following publications:

Patrick Procktor: Art and Life (Unicorn Press, 2010)

Keith Vaughan: The Mature Oils 1946-1977, (Sansom & Co., 2012)

The research is on two artists, Patrick Procktor (1936-2003), and Keith Vaughan (1912-1977). The monograph on Procktor – previously one of the least documented of the generation of artists who came to prominence in London in the Sixties – positions him in a history of art from which he had been notably absent. The research on Vaughan asserts a new reading of his work, one that is both deeper and more nuanced in its analysis of the ways in which personal experience and sexuality are encoded autobiographically within his work. Crucially, in both artists biography and work are symbiotically linked; the research therefore examines the links between life and art.

Revisionary in intent, the work examines trajectories of experience of gay British (or rather, English) artists in the twentieth century, artists who sought to express themselves and forge careers within the constraints of a heteronormative society, albeit one in which attitudes to sexuality were undergoing change. As gay men, both were constrained by the social mores of their times, and each used painting as a means to affirm personal and sexual identities. A key research interest is in the ways in which sexuality and persona are reflected in critical responses to the artist's work: in Vaughan, Procktor and other gay male artists of the period. The writing on both Procktor and Vaughan examines the relationship between their personal and professional/artistic lives, framed within a broader socio-political and art historical context. It asserts the place of biography as a means to understand and form new readings of the work. The work adds substantially to the literature and wider discourse on post-war British painting and social history.

BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

Though aware of Procktor as an undergraduate art student in the late Seventies, the research interest was ignited by an exhibition of his work in January 2005.¹ Upon reading the existing monograph and ghosted autobiography (which then constituted the most substantial available material on Procktor), it became apparent that, although a key artist of Sixties and Seventies London, Procktor was both under-researched and somewhat forgotten; there was surprisingly little published on him. An approach was made to the Redfern Gallery – who represent the artist's Estate – with the idea of some small-scale research. It was they who suggested a major book on Procktor. This was not a formal commission, and I was to seek a publisher for the work, though the gallery staff helped in a number of crucial ways. (See Research Methods & Sources).

It became clear that a biographical/art historical document might be written based largely on primary research, constituting a new body of knowledge, that wrote Procktor into an art history from which he was missing. Given the autobiographical nature of the artist's work it was appropriate to focus on both life and art. The research would combine biography, critique of the work and social history – a history that encompassed the social milieu in which Procktor operated, the machinations of the art world, and attitudes to homosexuality, along with perceptions of class and Englishness.

The sole previous monograph on the artist, by John McEwen, was published in 1999. It is a slender volume containing a 25-page extended biographical-critical essay. There was also Procktor's 1991 autobiography, which research findings were to prove untrustworthy as a record. Vaughan had been better served; although there was no monograph publication, Malcolm Yorke's comprehensive biography was published in 1991, and there existed also a number of exhibition catalogues and journals containing valuable critical essays. Whilst not suggesting that gay artists are the sole preserve of gay writers, both McEwen (b.1942) and Yorke (b.1938) are straight men, and neither enquired into the sexual aspect of their subject's lives and its impact on their work in any depth. I was born in 1956, a generation after Procktor and two after Vaughan, and my interpretations of both artists are informed – in part at least – by my own experience as a gay man and artist. Writing whilst his subject was still alive, McEwen's position

¹ The exhibition of Procktor's work was mounted by The Redfern Gallery, at The London Art Fair, Business Design Centre, Islington, January 2005.

on Procktor's sexuality was ambiguous, though it was not in fact within his remit to explore this aspect within his essay. Yorke meanwhile, though documenting Vaughan's sexual fetishism explicitly, did not fully explore its expression within the paintings. There existed then scope for a body of research which examined such aspects more deeply.

The research on Procktor was not undertaken with a PhD in mind; it was only post-publication in April 2010 that a doctorate by publication was considered. In September of that year the research on Vaughan commenced, and publication came two years later. Whereas the work on Procktor formed a large-scale individual research project undertaken over five years, the Vaughan publication is a collaboration with art dealer and Vaughan specialist Anthony Hepworth. The work is a catalogue raisonné of oil paintings prepared by Hepworth, to which the research contribution is an essay. The premise of the initial brief was to produce 'a dry essay outlining the stylistic and technical development of the work'.² Through debate with Hepworth, an agreement was formed to write about this development within a wider context, one that took into consideration the artist's background, personality and sexuality, set within the social and artistic context of the period. Hence it forms a continuation and development of interests established in the work on Procktor.

The research on both Procktor and Vaughan was authorised by their Estates, with substantial production costs met by the Redfern Gallery (Procktor) and by Anthony Hepworth (Vaughan). Each was keen that the texts should be both scholarly and accessible to a general informed art readership: the agreed model was that traditionally met by a Lund Humphries monograph. In considering narrative forms for each of the publications, the models were those of writers on twentieth-century British artists.³ Although during the earlier stages of the writing on Procktor non-linear or episodic narrative forms were considered, ultimately it seemed important to place him within an established tradition of biography from which he had so far been excluded; a linear narrative was therefore appropriate.

² The idea of a 'dry essay' was proposed to Anthony Hepworth by Toby Treves (former Tate curator of 20th century British art) before my involvement in the project.

³ Examples are the critical monographs of Michael Bird (on Sandra Blow), Mel Gooding (Patrick Heron; John Hoyland), and Andrew Lambirth (Roger Hilton). Other models were in more standard biographical formats: Frances Spalding's biography of John Minton; Calvin Tomkins *Off the Wall: a portrait of Robert Rauschenberg*; Tony Peake's *Derek Jarman*. The use of interview material/testimony was also partly informed by Harriet Vyner's biography of art dealer Robert Fraser, *Groovy Bob*, and by Jean Stein and George Plimpton's biography of Warhol muse Edie Sedgwick, *Edie*; each uses interwoven interview transcripts to forge a narrative of oral history.

RESEARCH METHODS & SOURCES

An important and substantial component of the research on Procktor was a series of interviews, over fifty of them conducted in person. Each entailed audio-recording a conversation with the research interviewee. A verbatim transcript of each interview (or its most relevant material) was then sent to its subject to review and authorise. Other interviews were conducted by telephone, and a transcript subsequently forwarded so that interviewees could then edit or comment as they wished. Some interviewees did not respond to the transcript, whilst others spent additional time in editing before then returning it. Interviewees responded during these recorded conversations in different ways: some appeared to find the process cathartic, whilst others were more guarded. Some interviewees - the more famous ones, such as Hockney - occasionally repeated material found in existing publications. All were generous of their time. In a minority of interviews there was a tendency for self-aggrandisement, or of contradictions to viewpoints or anecdotal material from other interviewees or from published sources. There was in some interviews contentious material, potentially upsetting to Procktor's family. Aware of the possible dangers therein, verification was sought wherever possible, and personal judgement used in weighing the validity or usefulness of material in forming the biography and critique. There was an awareness both of the attraction of gossip in biographical writing, and its potential to undermine the project.

The research on Procktor also included a large amount of archival work, with visits to archives at The Whitechapel Gallery, Tate, British Library, and research trips to look at archival material and the artist's work in Munich (Galerie Biedermann), Vicenza (Galleria Ghelfi) and Venice (Galleria del Cavallino). Interviews were conducted with Procktor's gallerists during these trips abroad. Additionally, the research drew on correspondence by Procktor in the archives of the Smithsonian Institute, Washington DC.⁴ Crucially, the Redfern Gallery provided unlimited access to their substantial archive of Procktor-related material, and to their large holdings of his work. They also opened their address book, forwarding request letters to potential interviewees, having at the outset formed a substantial list of people relevant to the research. The gallery also loaned various correspondence files, Procktor's accounts book, and his personal photographic archive of work from the early sixties until circa 1990. Housed in twenty-six annotated albums, this proved invaluable as a chronological record of the development of the

⁴ Photocopies of correspondence by Procktor, to the Lee Nordness Gallery, New York (1968) were forwarded by staff at the Smithsonian Institute. Other listed galleries and institutions were visited in person.

artist's work.

There was also much reading involved, of art and social histories, biographies, theoretical texts, and journal and newspaper articles. (See bibliography).

An examination of Vaughan had formed part of the research on Procktor, and this material was revisited and drawn upon in researching him. The initial focus was on the work, noting its content and development. Invaluably, Anthony Hepworth provided scores of jpegs of the paintings accumulated for his catalogue. In parallel with this activity was an engagement in reading and re-reading texts on Vaughan along with more general art historical texts, and the examination of important archival material. This included major holdings at the Tate Archive, with five full days spent there, reading, note-making and arranging for material to be photocopied for research purposes. Alerted by Vaughan's Estate to pay particular attention to previously unpublished wartime correspondence with the artist's mother, this and other unpublished correspondence and journal material held at the Tate formed a basis from which to establish new readings of his work.

Further archival material was accessed in the private collections of artist/writer Gerard Hastings and that of Anthony Hepworth (the artist's journal entries, notes on painting, correspondence, and photographs). Another research visit was to the archive of The University of Aberystwyth, which holds important photographic material by Vaughan. Visits were also undertaken to examine key works in public and private collections, and privileged access gained to the major collection of Vaughan's most important collectors, the late John Ball and Gordon Hargreaves. Administered by Anthony Hepworth Fine Art, this contains many key paintings. Although the majority of the research involved looking at archival material, reading existing texts, and close examination of Vaughan's paintings, a handful of interviews were undertaken, though these were not fundamental to the project in the way they had been to Procktor. They included a telephone interview with the artist Marc Vaux (also an interviewee for the Procktor research), who had been taught by Vaughan at the Slade. There was also an email correspondence with Peter Schlesinger, another of Vaughan's former Slade students.⁵

⁵ Conversations about Vaughan were also undertaken with the collector Allen Freer, and with former Slade student and one-time intimate of Vaughan, Roger Cook.

RESEARCH THEMES

Biography and authorship

Writing firstly on Procktor, the research intention was to produce a 'definitive' biographical/art historical text, though as the work progressed so too did the realisation that this notion is problematic. There formed a gradual appreciation that one cannot make 'definitive' statements about one's subjects, that attempts to do so will fail; but that one might make informed interpretations of them based on accumulated knowledge through research, and contain or express something of the essence of the subject within the artificial construct of biography. ⁶ Looking back on the research, the initial intention was not to set out to write 'a biography' of Procktor, and I was taken aback at being introduced as his biographer during a research visit to the Redfern Gallery in London. A growing fascination with the artist, with his extraordinary personality and life story within the context of his period, had resulted in an ensnarement in biographical writing. As author/biographer I came to realise that both Procktor – and later Vaughan – were ultimately unknowable, that within the research and writing each came into greater or lesser focus at different points; that one could grasp certain *facts* from which then to interpret one's subject and his personal and artistic motivations, but that each of them remained elusive or aloof, as they had in life; lives in which they constantly negotiated a necessary balance between disclosure and discretion. ⁷

Consideration of the notion of a *definitive text* continued subsequent to publication of the research, as further material came to light, or new opportunities to engage with material occurred. A particular example was that of curating a museum show of Procktor's work in 2012, the first such exhibition since the artist's death. ⁸ This provided an opportunity to engage with the artist's work in a different way than that during the research and writing. It demanded another kind of narrative development, that of forming a coherent display of the artist's work and its development throughout a four-decade-long career. Installed in three adjoining rooms,

⁶ The writing on Procktor utilises devices such as one might find in fiction to propel the narrative: pace, denouement, contrasting (or supporting) viewpoints, and chapter titles suggestive/allusive of content, echoing Hermione Lee's comment that 'Biography is a form of narrative, not just a presentation of facts.' Hermione Lee, *Biography: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 5. The novelist John Updike wrote that most biographies as 'are really just novels with indexes'. See: France, Peter, and St. Clair, William (Editors) *Mapping Lives: The Uses of Biography*, (British Academy, 2003) p. 8.

⁷ In reviewing my book on Procktor, David Plante wrote: 'Ian Massey in his book, Patrick Procktor, Art and Life, is fully aware of how one never could know Patrick.'

<http://chromajournal.blogspot.co.uk/search?q=procktor> - May 2010

⁸ *Patrick Procktor: Art and Life*, Huddersfield Art Gallery, 25 August-1 December 2012.

the first and largest space was solely of canvases, allowing for a focus on Procktor as a painter (the selected works dated from 1961 to 2002). Watercolours and then graphic works were hung in the two subsequent rooms.

Reviews of the exhibition picked up on this theme of Procktor as painter, and so reaffirmed the curatorial intention. Charles Darwent wrote Procktor back into the limelight he had once shared with his friend David Hockney:

On a screen in Huddersfield Art Gallery, images digitised from the artist's Sixties photo album swim into focus. Many are of a young man – the artist's model lover, Gervase Griffiths, sexy in a rock-star way – wearing not many clothes and, eventually, none at all. It seems you have seen Griffiths's arse somewhere before, hauling itself out of a Los Angeles swimming pool or lying, supine, on a towel. But you haven't, because those bottoms were painted by David Hockney and this one was snapped by Patrick Procktor. Patrick ...? Exactly. Half a century ago, Hockney and Procktor were both in the Whitechapel's New Generation show, and their names have been linked ever since. Which means that you will definitely know Hockney's and very likely not Procktor's. Wisdom has it that there was only room for one painter of the Hockney kind in the 1960s, and Hockney got the job. Which is one of several myths dispelled by *Patrick Procktor: Art and Life* [...] Two things quickly become clear. One is that Procktor did sometimes paint in a Hockney-ish way, particularly after the Yorkshireman reintroduced him to watercolour in 1967. But he also worked in all kinds of other ways, which has not helped his reputation either. The second thing this, tight, clever show makes clear is that Procktor was a very much better painter than Hockney, at least in the sense of being more endlessly proficient.⁹

Michael Bracewell's review also highlighted Procktor's importance as a painter:

... while Procktor is perhaps better known for the elegance and glamour of his poised and charming watercolours [...] it is his paintings which seem to make the strongest claim for his achievements as an artist [...] To a contemporary audience, some of Procktor's portraits in watercolours might bring to mind the pop-hip portraiture of Elizabeth Peyton. The sense of informality and visual chic is perhaps on a similar frequency of ease. But this

⁹ Charles Darwent, *Sometimes a painter can be too good*, *The Independent on Sunday*, 2nd September 2012, pp.55-57

seems secondary to his accomplishments as a painter in oils and acrylics, in which – at his best – he combined rare lucidity with a poet’s depth of feeling. ¹⁰

Curating this exhibition reinforced a conclusion formed in the research, that Procktor had as a painter been marginalised critically. It allowed some redress to the perception of him as essentially a gifted watercolourist, whilst allowing space also for an evaluation of his important work in that medium, and of that as a printmaker.

Authorship and identity

Film theorist Richard Dyer has written:

All authorship and all sexual identities are performances, done with greater or less facility, always problematic in relation to any self separable from the realization of self in the discursive modes available. The study of (gay/lesbian) authorship is the study of those modes and the particular ways in which they have been performed in given texts. ¹¹

For ‘texts’ here one might read creative work in any genre: and the idea of ‘self’ as a social as well as an artistic performance (the two tend to be symbiotic). This theme, of the constructed persona as a work of self-authorship, is central to both the researched subjects, and to my own role as author. The authorial voice is itself a construction, a form of performance, hence I was conscious of my own presence as author, of my ideas, experience (and its lack), and their impact on the narrative as it formed and changed. In writing of this nature, there is a necessity for a balance, here effectively self-negotiated in the absence of one’s subjects, as to how both author and subject might be asserted, or disappear/appear within the narrative. So the formation of the texts on these painters not only examines the ways in which they wrote or transcribed their experience in/into paint, but also incorporates an interwoven authorial voice to form the narrative. Throughout, there was a necessity to retain a healthy degree of distance from the subjects, to remain at once both ambivalent and protective towards them as individuals. Certainly as Procktor’s authorized biographer, his biography now forms part of mine, and his posthumous life and reputation are contingent to a substantial degree on the research and its findings.

¹⁰ Michael Bracewell, *Patrick Procktor, Frieze*, issue 152, January-February 2013, pp.168-9

¹¹ Richard Dyer *Believing in Fairies: The Author and the Homosexual in Inside Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, Ed. Diana Fuss, Routledge, 1991, p. 188.

Another aspect of biography that relates to the research is that of documenting the lives of others, as minor narratives within those of the main subjects. In both Vaughan and Procktor there were subsidiary characters, many of them gay men, whose often poignant lives might otherwise have remained invisible. In this respect the work adds to a narrative of gay experience in the twentieth century. An example is Procktor's lover and muse Gervase Griffiths, the model and aspirant pop singer who died in 1981 whilst in his mid-thirties. From a knowledge of Procktor's work gleaned from the research publication, the curator of Tate Liverpool's 2013 exhibition *GLAM* selected a Procktor portrait of Griffiths for the show, hanging it next to David Hockney's *Mr and Mrs Clark and Percy*. The painting was also reproduced as a Tate postcard. Griffiths and Procktor were thus written into institutional art history.¹²

The research contextualises Vaughan's and Procktor's artistic development within both English and European Romantic traditions, and within the context of Western modernism. It examines the ways in which they borrowed and evolved from these traditions in order to inscribe themselves autobiographically in their work. Their quests to make sense of and assert personal identity in paint were inherently utopian. The queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz has written:

Utopia is always about the not-quite-here or the notion that something is missing. Queer cultural production is both an acknowledgement of the lack that is endemic to any heteronormative rendering of the world and a building, a "world making," in the face of that lack. [...] Queer utopian practice is about "building" and "doing" in response to that status of nothing assigned to us by the heteronormative world.¹³

The 'building' and 'doing' in Vaughan and Procktor is their way of coping with and of expressing this lack. There is a passage in Esteban about Warhol's pre-Pop work of the Fifties, which might apply equally to Vaughan's work, both of that decade, and to the majority of his output:

¹² Curator Darren Pih selected Procktor's *Gervase X* (1968) for *GLAM* (Tate Liverpool, 9 February-12 May 2013).

¹³ In his book *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, José Esteban Muñoz draws on Ernst Bloch's and Theodor Adorno's theory of the utopian function of art in 'Something's Missing: A discussion between Ernst Bloch and Theodor Adorno on the Contradictions of Utopian Longing,' in *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays*. Boston: MIT Press, 1988. (See Muñoz p. 37). The Muñoz quote printed here is from p. 118 of his book.

When one looks at Warhol's early works from the 1950s one grasps a gilded world of homoerotic desire that registers the unfolding of a line of utopian thought, a desire for a place and time that was not imaginable for men who desired men. ¹⁴

The focus on sexuality and its encodification became more acute in the research on Vaughan, for whom the expression of sexual identity was a constant in his work, reflected also in the continuously reiterated sexual and artistic frustration of his journals. Vaughan's career can be seen as that of an artist perpetually striving through his art towards a form of utopia in which he might create his place in the world; a place where as an outsider he might achieve equilibrium. The metaphor of the walled garden used in the text on Vaughan is in direct reference to this idea of utopia as an imaginary, longed-for haven.

Language, form and performance

Both Vaughan and Procktor utilized established formal and technical/stylistic currencies, in doing so queering (or re-queering) the canon. Stylistically, Vaughan often based his painted male figures on forms from classical sculpture. This use of the idealised forms and postures of antiquity anchored his work in an established tradition, so licensing its homoerotic subtext. He also used the themes of classical myth as subject matter; many of his works use myth and allegory to convey codified personal meaning. From the late Fifties he developed a more expressive painterly language, one that was informed by gestural abstraction. His subject matter of figure, figure in landscape and landscape, remained constant, whilst style, technique and application developed from this assimilation of contemporary painting. His use of the techniques of abstraction extended also to an abstraction of form, so that the body became camouflaged or deconstructed, merging with other bodies, and into the landscapes in which they are set. (One might add that the blatant iconography of Sixties Pop was anaethema to Vaughan's sensibility; he felt bewildered and outmoded by it.)

At the time when Vaughan's more physical engagement with painting began to evolve in the late Fifties, he was in his mid-forties. Conversely, Procktor's engagement with a self-evidently physical mode of painting commenced whilst a student at the Slade School (1958-62; the period coinciding with Vaughan's painterly transition). Procktor adopted an expressive form of painting influenced by David Bomberg and his acolytes, of whom several were present at the Slade

¹⁴ Esteban Muñoz, p. 144.

during this period.¹⁵ Notably, Procktor chose this Bombergian approach in preference to the equally dominant tendency then current at the Slade, that of the more restrained practice of the Euston Road School. Upon graduation in 1962, Procktor continued to work in this manner until a short time after his first London exhibition in 1963. The work in this show was largely autobiographical in content, and included veiled references to his homosexual relationships, though its underlying subject can be defined as the act of painting itself, in which, incorporating some of the formal devices of abstraction (which like Vaughan he took from artists such as de Kooning), he propelled (or performed) himself into life as a contemporary painter. Procktor's subsequent development during the course of the Sixties was towards a more restrained practice, of a form of dandyist painting in the tradition of Whistler (and hence of a different brand of performance). Procktor's use of watercolour, the medium he became especially associated with, was itself dandyist in its apparent ease of execution. The very diaphaneity of watercolour – and its historical association with aristocratic lady amateurs – bolstered perceptions of Procktor as lightweight, or served to confirm such views for those who wished them so. The lightness of touch Procktor developed served in fact as an essence of modernity in the Seventies, providing him with 'the chic of facility' (a term used during a research interview by the artist John Craxton, in reference to Procktor's watercolour portraits), and aligning him with artists and designers of his circle: including Hockney, Ossie Clark and Celia Birtwell.

Classicism: literature and form

Of Cy Twombly's use of ancient culture as source material, Roland Barthes has written that it 'operates' a kind of citation, adding:

[a citation that is] that of an era of bygone, calm, leisurely, even decadent studies: English preparatory schools, Latin verses, desks, lamps, tiny pencil annotations. That is culture for TW [Twombly]: an ease, a memory, an irony, a posture, the gesture of a dandy.¹⁶

Here Barthes might be referring to a character from Evelyn Waugh, or to Lytton Strachey and the Cambridge Apostles. His explicit reference to Englishness and to a particular type of English class-bound masculinity is relevant to both Vaughan and Procktor; as is his reference to dandyist

¹⁵ Amongst Slade students at the time were Bomberg's former students Dorothy Mead and Dennis Creffield. Frank Auerbach, another former Bomberg student, was a visiting tutor. Vaughan also taught on a part-time basis at the Slade when Procktor was there. The two became lifelong friends.

¹⁶ Barthes, Roland, *The Responsibility of Forms*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986, p. 162.

gesture, though that is more obviously apparent in the latter. ¹⁷ Procktor had initially wanted to go from school to study Classics at Oxford or Cambridge, but his family were unable to support him. Vaughan, largely self-taught, immersed himself in European literature and poetry and in the Classics whilst a young man, and his habitual reading deeply informed his art and sensibility. In both it might be said that the kind of arcane education/sensibility credited by Barthes to Twombly (in Twombly's case as something adopted rather than experienced; hence inherently dandyist), acted at once as solace, disguise and defence. Procktor certainly used a kind of Firbankian verbal repartée as a mode of self-defence. Readings of his apparently felicitous art were informed by this element of his constructed persona, his verbal felicity a deflective smokescreen which problematised contemporary readings of his work.

There is a parallel with Twombly in Vaughan also, in their references to the Classical world. Barthes has described Twombly's '[making of] antiquity into a repository of decorative forms.' ¹⁸ As previously mentioned, for Vaughan the Classical world provided a repository, both of narratives within which to frame his motifs, and of forms; those of antique sculpture of the male body. Twombly of course referenced its written language as well as its forms, in painting often centred on a form of writing; *écriture* as sign/motif. Neither artist's work is *about* the Classical world in any literal or historical (history painting) sense, but rather, both grasp elements or associations from it, in art that evokes the sensual via allusion to the cerebral and literary-poetical.

Dandyism and the artist's body

The American gay artist Tom Burr works with subject matter associated with the physical sites of gay desire in the twentieth century, and with gay artistic and literary figures such as Warhol and Truman Capote. His work reinstates demolished sites and marginalised identities, making both his subjects and their social peripheralisation centre-stage; both content and subtext. He writes them in, or back into, the history of gay experience. In this I feel a degree of kinship. Writing about Burr, Stuart Comer has described:

¹⁷ In each research subject the construction of a dandyist persona, in part intellectually-driven, is a factor. Vaughan's dandyism, found in his sartorialism and gentlemanly restraint, was of a more conservative brand than that of the theatrical Procktor. His sense of himself as a virile masculine sensualist was crucial to him personally, and to his painting. Notably, the sensual aspect of Vaughan's painting greatly diminished when his own sexual virility disappeared.

¹⁸ *The Responsibility of Forms*, p. 189.

the abject dandyism of specific historical figures like Jean Cocteau, Warhol and Capote [towards whom Burr] further focuses his complex analysis on the problematic condition of homosexual visibility and the instability of gay identity as it shifts between the performance of the hyperbolized queer artistic personality, and the decay and humiliation of the artist's public body. ¹⁹

Comer's reference to abject dandyism, and the decay and humiliation of the artist's body, is also relevant to both Vaughan and Procktor. In a review of my book on Procktor, Keith Miller summed up as follows:

The really difficult questions which follow on from this [Procktor's understanding of how an affectation of ease would diminish people's appreciation of his art] are not deeply considered by the book: whether Procktor accepted that diminution, or even sheltered behind it; whether, indeed, he saw in the disappointments of his later life some kind of necessary fulfilment, a fulfilment of the conventions of narrative no less than the laws of fate – an abjection in life being necessary, or even sufficient, for a perfect consummation of the life-as-art. ²⁰

Like Comer, Miller refers to the *abject*, also connecting this to dandyism and decay, shoring up the idea of the tragic homosexual's denigration, romanticised in Wildean terms as inevitable fate. Less romantically, the heterosexual designation of homosexuality as abject has historically been internalised by homosexuals, certainly of Vaughan's and Procktor's generations. This is an important problem in the assessment and documentation of the lives of gay artists (and of gay lives in the plural), one that remains an ongoing issue in my work on gay artists.

¹⁹ Stuart Comer, *Tom Burr: Other Voices, Other Rooms*, in *Tom Burr: Extrospective*, JRP-Ringier, Zurich, 2006, pp.91-92.

²⁰ Keith Miller's review of *Patrick Procktor: Art and Life*, *Times Literary Supplement*, 9th July 2010, p. 26.

CONCLUSION

In examining and documenting the art and experience of twentieth-century gay artists, the research presented here adds importantly to the literature of the period. The work on Procktor reinstates him into an art history from which he had been excluded, and in doing so adds new knowledge to our understanding of the art world and society of the period. The work on Vaughan uses biography as a means to provide new and pertinent readings of the meanings and underlying motives of his art.

This research forms part of an ongoing project, extending beyond the PhD. It will continue to address the theme of visibility and identity, examining strategies of negotiation and self-definition amongst gay artists, considering their adoption and subversion of formal languages as they attempt to write themselves into history.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This is a review of the existing literature on Keith Vaughan and Patrick Procktor. It includes texts specific to each artist, and titles from the wider literature on British art in which they appear.

KEITH VAUGHAN

As sole subject:

John Ball et al, *Keith Vaughan: Images of Man*. London: Inner London Education Authority, 1981

This is an illustrated catalogue for a show of Vaughan's oils from the period 1946-1960, with commentaries by John Ball on the paintings illustrated, and short essays by Bryan Robertson, Bernard Denvir and Hetty Einzig.

In *Recollections of Keith Vaughan* (pp.6-7) Robertson incorporates anecdotal reminiscence within an assessment of Vaughan's achievement, describing his temperament and its echoes in the work. Denvir's *A truth does exist* (pp.8-9) sets Vaughan's development against a background of Neo-Romanticism and Abstract Expressionism, concluding that Vaughan found his truth not only in 'a rare formal coherence, but in the expression of a rewarding human sensibility.'

Hetty Einzig's *A Figure in a Landscape* (pp.10-13) makes explicit the relationship between Vaughan's sexuality and painting. She notes a tendency in formalist criticism to separate Vaughan's life and art:

to ignore complexity of meaning, the personal and social tensions, of Vaughan's obsessive subject matter. (p. 11)

In what is amongst the most perceptive critiques of the artist's work, Einzig correctly describes Vaughan's art as: 'the expression of a whole moral and emotional outlook', going on to note a sense in many of his paintings:

not just of the sublimation of personal tensions but also of the self-protective creation of a private world and the use of a vocabulary of 'coded' forms and gesture... (p. 11)

Andrew Lambirth (et al), *Keith Vaughan: Paintings and Drawings*. London: Osborne Samuel, 2007

This exhibition catalogue includes the transcript of a conversation between Vaughan's friend and collector John Ball and Nicholas Goodison (pp.6-14). Here they consider Vaughan's position within the context of Fifties and Sixties art, and discuss contemporaneous perceptions of his

work given its homoerotic subtext. Ball notes the 'lack of critical respect' this engendered and the 'distinguished isolation' of his mature work. He also describes the duality of Vaughan's personality, and its expression in the tension between Classical and Romantic impulses found in the work. The conversation also encompasses Vaughan's key influences, his photography, the influence of ballet, and the artist's use of colour and relationship with abstraction.

A short personal recollection of Vaughan by Veronica Gosling (pp.15-16) is followed by Lambirth's essay *The Creative Mind* (pp.17-23). Lambirth interweaves biographical factors with interpretations of the work and its motifs of landscape, male figures, and assemblies/crowds. He writes of Vaughan's disposition as man and artist, his key influences, and pioneering depictions of the male nude. He quotes selectively from Vaughan's journals and from critical commentaries, though adds no new insights to those of previous writers.

Bryan Robertson & David Thompson, *Keith Vaughan: A Retrospective Exhibition*. London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1962

A key reference source, this catalogue accompanied Vaughan's first retrospective, of paintings, drawings, and gouaches, many of which are illustrated in monochrome. It includes essays by Robertson and Thompson describing the development of Vaughan's work, and biographical notes written by the artist. Also included is Vaughan's 'Thoughts on Painting', written in November 1961 (pp.39-41).

Bryan Robertson, *Keith Vaughan*. London: Austin Desmond, 1989

In this exhibition catalogue, Robertson's essay (pp.2-7) describes the artist's development within a context of biography. Robertson notes Vaughan's success and recognition during his lifetime, before then asking why he has 'sunk without trace' since his death. He goes on to describe the ways in which Vaughan developed his art by selective assimilation of aspects of modernity, also noting his humanist vision 'tempered always by homo-eroticism'. He describes Vaughan's painted world as 'an inhabited Arcadia', and refers to its important sources of inspiration in literature, music and ballet. Robertson goes on to reference Braque, de Staël and Matisse and the way in which Vaughan resolved his own vision by learning from these artists. He defines Vaughan's position in relation to modernity, stating that he was rooted in the social restraints and 'aesthetic ideals and pursuits' of the Thirties. Robertson goes on to describe Vaughan's 'obsession' with the male figure, 'twenty years before Bacon and Hockney', also describing Vaughan's gradual disenfranchisement with contemporary art and with life in general during the Sixties.

Keith Vaughan, *Keith Vaughan: Journal and Drawings 1939-65*. London: Alan Ross, 1966

This volume is of the artist's own selection of journal entries, sketchbook drawings and photographs. The journal entries provide great insight into Vaughan's philosophy, ideas and attitudes. Amongst its many reproductions are those of highly-worked and annotated working drawings for paintings, making this publication an invaluable record of Vaughan's process.

Keith Vaughan (ed. Alan Ross), *Keith Vaughan Journals 1939-1977*. London: John Murray, 1989

In common with the previous title, this volume excludes the more explicitly sexual content of Vaughan's journals. It does though continue and conclude the journal narrative, so adds usefully to the earlier volume, though it contains few drawings. The insightful introduction, by Vaughan's friend Alan Ross, provides a background for the journals, and through sensitive use of personal anecdote analyses the man and the artist (pp.vii-xv).

Malcolm Yorke, *Keith Vaughan: His Life and Work*. London: Constable, 1990

This is the only full biography of Vaughan, and hence a crucial reference source. In researching his subject, Yorke interviewed key individuals who knew the artist, and drew also on Vaughan's journals and correspondence, on reviews and art-historical texts. Yorke contextualises Vaughan's life and art within a chronological narrative, combining the personal, social and art-historical. Although he explores frankly the sado-masochistic side of Vaughan's sexuality, Yorke does not examine its encodification in the work explicitly nor in any real depth.

Publications in which Vaughan features:

Noel Barber, *Conversations with Painters*. London: Collins, 1964

This book contains interviews undertaken by the journalist Barber with ten male artists, of whom Vaughan is one (pp.69-82). In an author's note, Barber states that he counted each of these artists as friends. For each, a descriptive biographical preface (by Daily Mail art critic Pierre Jeannerat) is followed by Barber's interview, presented as a Q&A transcript. Barber's questions focus on artistic philosophy, influence and technique, questioning also the artist's position in contemporary society.

Emmanuel Cooper, *The Sexual Perspective*. London: Routledge, 1994

Subtitled 'Homosexuality and Art in the Last 100 Years in the West,' Cooper's book contains several references to Vaughan. In describing a theme of wrestlers, Cooper links Vaughan with Duncan Grant and Francis Bacon (p. 146). Cooper also considers Vaughan within the bohemian context of Fitzrovia and that of the Neo-Romantic artists of the Second World War, alongside the gay artists John Craxton, John Minton, the Roberts Colquhoun and MacBryde, and Bacon. (p. 214) Writing about Vaughan and Minton, Cooper describes their 'respectable middle-class families' and 'a certain 'class confidence'. This confidence he argues provided both artists with an ability to 'cope to some extent with their own sexuality in their work.' He contrasts this with the more difficult experience of the working class Colquhoun and MacBryde. (p. 216) In a longer section on Vaughan, Cooper provides general biographical information as a background to Vaughan's paintings, noting his focus on the male nude, and its gradual abstraction influenced by European modernism. He describes qualities in Vaughan's figures: monumentality, vulnerability, heroicism, 'powerful sexual presence', and refers to the artist's private sketchbooks as explorations of sex, including sado-masochism. (pp.224-228).

Patrick Heron, *The Changing Forms of Art*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955

Within a chapter of this book titled 'Modern English Romantics: Sutherland, Vaughan, Wynter', Heron argues that poetry in painting can be determined in its formal, plastic qualities as much as in literary/Romantic ones. Writing of pictorial organisation, he describes the dynamic between formal qualities and the painting's subject. In a section on Vaughan (pp.168-171) Heron notes an indebtedness to Sutherland, particularly in the use of a network of 'tense, wiry' black lines as a way of constructing an image. Going on to describe figures in landscape (and merging the two elements) as a key theme in Vaughan's work, he describes the artist's move away from linear construction towards 'a more spacious configuration' in the late Forties, informed by Cezanne, Matisse and Cubism. In summing up, Heron notes Vaughan's 'two strongest and somewhat disparate tendencies'. These are his 'concern for plastic form' and 'his very English love of a more illustrative romantic idiom.' (p. 171)

David Mellor, *A Paradise Lost: the Neo-Romantic Imagination in Britain, 1935-1935-55*. London: Lund Humphries/Barbican Art Gallery, 1987

Published to accompany an exhibition, this book includes limited but pertinent material on Vaughan. Mellor describes Vaughan's 'remakings of [Henry] Moore's powerful figure of the matriarch and child' in which he:

additionally draw a single, woolly, wax resist male, embracing an infant to his ghostly armature.

Mellor goes on, in a concise and incisive précis of Vaughan's art:

For it is the *male* body which presides, sorrowfully and awkwardly, over Vaughan's entire pictorial production. Vaughan's paintings are linked to his early wartime National Service duty [...] that is to say, *his project is to tend the male body*. [my italics] (p. 25)

This 'tending' of the male body informed my own consideration of Vaughan.

Bryan Robertson and John Russell, *Private View*. London: Nelson, 1965

This book, illustrated with documentary photographs by Lord Snowdon, forms an important record of the British art scene in the Sixties. Within a short text on Vaughan, Robertson describes his theme of the male nude in a landscape and its progression towards a more abstract, less illustrative style of painting (p. 107). He describes the virtue of a 'total sincerity and conviction' in the work's 'sturdy, rough-hewn awkwardness', going on to note in Vaughan's more recent painting a more eloquent, broad and richer style. Robertson also describes the man: laconic, puritan, humanist, implying that these qualities are inherent in the work.

Malcolm Yorke, *The Spirit of Place: Nine Neo-Romantic Artists and their times*. London: Constable, 1988

Yorke's introduction provides a historical context, that of nineteenth-century Romantic painting, and its sources in literature and poetry. Stating that English culture has a permanent disposition towards the Romantic, Yorke examines its sources, meanings and interpretations. He sees a tempering of this inclination within a Classical tendency in the 20th century. There follows individual chapters on Paul Nash, John Piper and Graham Sutherland, and *The Background*, a chapter in which Yorke locates Neo-Romanticism in its place and time:

[showing] how the ideas of the three senior painters [...] were made available to the younger painters who looked up to them as leaders. (p. 146)

Yorke refers to the Depression and literature of the Thirties and onset of the war, setting Neo-Romanticism against a socio-political European backdrop (Spanish Civil War, Communism, the intellectual Left). He also describes wartime London and the bohemian groups centred in Fitzrovia, Soho and Bloomsbury, and the artistic and literary convergence of these networks (p. 151). Yorke describes also retrogressive London art world Establishment attitudes to the European avant garde.

In a chapter on Vaughan, Yorke gives a biographical outline narrative within which he utilises journal extracts (the book predates his biography of Vaughan). He describes the influence of Palmer, Sutherland, Picasso, Braque and Matisse, and states that by the late Forties Vaughan had 'shaken off most traces of his Neo-Romantic apprenticeship.' (p. 273) Yorke goes on to deliver a précis of Vaughan's post-Neo-Romantic career within a broad art historical context. He describes his subject as 'the most formidable talent of all the younger generation of Neo-Romantics.' (p. 282)

PATRICK PROCKTOR

As sole subject:

Patrick Kinmonth, *Patrick Procktor*. Venice: Galleria del Cavallino, 1985

The renowned theatre designer Patrick Kinmonth was a friend of Procktor. His essay 'Studies for a Portrait of Patrick Procktor' (c.2,700 words), is notable for its mannered writing style, in which he gives an impression of the artist and his work as relics of the late nineteenth or early twentieth-century. He is though a perceptive commentator, and highlights a central problem in responses to Procktor and his art:

His conspicuousness of stature in a crowded room, wreathed in the laurels of Sweet Afton cigarettes, has made him a social object [...] This has led sometimes to a false ascription of his motives in painting by people who look more closely at the artist than his work at private views. *How amusing they may say, affecting a wry smile in front of the delicate tragedy of a still-life.* (p. 12)

John McEwen, *Patrick Procktor*. Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1999

At the time of publication this ninety-six-page monograph was the most substantial work on Procktor; its flyleaf describes it as the 'first major study' of the artist. It includes 66 colour illustrations of Procktor's work, with a number of other works reproduced in black and white.

McEwen's essay (c.5,000 words) is based on conversations with Procktor and four of his friends.

²¹ Largely biographical and anecdotal, the author tends to emphasise a historical/traditional context for Procktor's work rather than a contemporary one. It provides an intriguing portrait of the man, though one senses it is a portrait steered as much by Procktor as by the author. ²² McEwen places his subject in a 'vivid artistic strain' in which he includes aristocratic English eccentric Stephen Tennant:

dilettante painter, poet and writer [...] at odds with the dullness of the English utilitarian spirit. (p. 8)

By emphasising Procktor's wit and flamboyance, McEwen reinforces an existing public image of the artist. He comments on misguided perceptions of Procktor as a dilettante, going on though to state that Tennant's description of Cecil Beaton's book *Time Exposure* 'could well apply to his [Procktor's] art.' Tennant had written:

this book, this bouquet, a *corbeille de fleurs* real and false, evokes the *carnet de bal*, in pink cardboard, stamped in silver [...] in Cecil's art it is always the birthday morning, the eve of the ball, the rise of the curtain. (p. 8)

The impression given is therefore Camp, superficial, and anti-modern.

McEwen goes on to compare Procktor with Whistler; in relation to the apparent ease of Procktor's production adding Whistler's quote 'started one day, finished the next'. (p. 9)

Like that of Kinmonth, the overall sense in McEwen's essay is of a man and artist out of time, stranded in the past. Of a wall at Procktor's house upon which friends including Cecil Beaton, Derek Jarman and David Hockney had drawn or painted flowers, McEwen writes, in a statement that reads as a definition of Procktor himself: 'The wall remains, an eccentric legacy of a now historic era.'

²¹ McEwen's interviewees were Roger Cook, Christopher Gibbs, Michael Upton and Kyffin Williams.

²² In a research interview McEwen made it clear that his subject tended to be elusive when faced with probing questions, including those about his art.

Patrick Procktor, *Self-Portrait*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991

Based on a series of tape-recorded interviews, Procktor's ghostwritten autobiography is an account of his life up until the time of his wife's death in 1984, with the period 1970-84 glossed over in the final eighteen pages. The book is unreliable as a source of information, on several occasions contradicted by research interviewees, or by an examination of verifiable information. Though conversational and occasionally confessional in tone, Procktor chose not to divulge much of his private life, as became apparent from conversations, undertaken for research, with the book's writer Ian Hunt, and its editor Angelica Huston. As a narrative it is particularly interesting on Procktor's childhood, National Service, art college years and Sixties career, when its frothy conversational tone serves to summon up the energy of the period. It also includes useful commentaries on sources of iconography in Procktor's more impenetrable pictures from the Sixties.

Tessa Sidey, *Patrick Procktor: Prints 1959-1985*. London: The Redfern Gallery/Editions Alecto in collaboration with Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, 1985

Curator and print specialist Tessa Sidey's introductory essay in this catalogue raisonné of Procktor's prints is amongst the more serious and cogent analyses of the artist. Like McEwen, Sidey positions Procktor within an English Romantic tradition. Of the *China Series* etchings (1980) for instance, Sidey cites Procktor's 'deliberately picturesque' choice of locations:

continuing an English tradition that goes back to the topography of Thomas Daniell and George Chinnery. (p. 23)

Inherent to Sidey's critique is the point that the artist's concerns are essentially anachronistic when considered against those of many of his contemporaries. She states that both the landscape imagery of a number of Procktor's important prints, and his chosen medium of aquatint distanced him:

from the mainstream of avant garde printmaking, which in the late sixties and early seventies, was dominated by the 'multiple' and the 'screenprint' with its possibilities of photo-techniques. (p. 17)

In summing up, Sidey writes:

At a time when artists have been obsessed with formal issues, he has continued to celebrate the activity of *holding up a mirror to nature* and of putting paint, watercolour and aquatint on a flat surface. Like Matisse, his work gives pleasure to the eye. (p. 23)

Bryan Robertson and David Hockney: Welshpool: Patrick Procktor Paintings 1959-1989, Oriel 31, 1989

In this catalogue for a touring retrospective, Robertson writes perceptively about several stages of Procktor's career. (pp.8-13) Robertson places Procktor's development in context by providing a background to his art: training at the Slade, where he notes the influence of Bomberg's circle; the figuration/abstraction debates of the Sixties, in which he cites the period's American and European context; and the technical and thematic changes in the work. Robertson comments on an important aspect of considering Procktor in art and social history; that of his critical comparison to David Hockney. In describing 'the range of possibilities open to Procktor as a student', Robertson states:

the situation was complicated by the precocious and much publicised arrival on the scene of the super-student David Hockney and the almost equally early impact of his older contemporary at the Royal College, R.B. Kitaj. (p. 10)

Robertson, a former lover and lifelong friend of Procktor, writes from an underlying personal interest, one tempered by subjective appraisal.

Hockney's contribution is an anecdotal reminiscence of Procktor in the 1960s. (p. 6)

Publications in which Procktor features:

Noel Barber, *Conversations with Painters*. London: Collins, 1964

The entry under Vaughan provides details of this book. The section within it on Procktor provides a useful insight into the artist at a crucial time in his development, as he worked towards a second London exhibition during a period of transition. (pp.147-58)

Bryan Robertson and John Russell, *Private View*. London: Nelson, 1965

Written at a time when Procktor's work was very much in transition stylistically, Robertson's short text on Procktor describes his various contradictions, including a gregarious personality and 'almost guarded privacy', noting that these contradictions co-exist in the stylistic eclecticism

of his work. He notes Procktor's influences: Vaughan, Bacon, Hockney, and Kitaj, referring also to the artist's ongoing search for 'a formal and spatial context' to make his images convincing and coherent. (p. 250)

Bryan Robertson and David Thompson: *The New Generation*. London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1964

This is the catalogue for an important show of twelve young painters, both figurative and abstract, all of them selected by Robertson. The four works shown by each artist are illustrated, along with a portrait photograph and short artist's statement. There is also a short text on each artist by Thompson. Of Procktor he noted:

compared with other painters of his generation in this exhibition, Procktor looks almost traditional in the actual use of the medium. (p. 75)

Writing at an important transitional period in Procktor's work (following his first, highly acclaimed 1963 show), Thompson correctly notes the difference between the Slade-trained Procktor's work in comparison to the 'emblazoned clarity of image' of other artists (Bridget Riley, Patrick Caulfield, and Peter Phillips were amongst other painters included).

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