

Andrew Logan

Video Interview Transcript for the Portrait Explorer in the IT Gallery

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Could you describe your interest in decoration?

I trained as an architect, I'm a self-taught artist and you have to remember for anyone who has never done architectural training but when I was doing it in the sixties it was all straight lines in black-and-white and very, very constraining. I've always loved very elaborate things, so when I started to make things and began a life as an artist, I just collected things and I love what I would call, or what Duggie Fields my friend would call, maximalism, not minimalism, that's gone and dead, we're 'maximalists' which means really, one layer on top of another.

How did the Zandra Rhodes portrait come about?

The portrait of Zandra Rhodes came about... I had lost my last studio I think in a fire in the late 70s and we were lodgers in her house in St Stephen's Gardens and I was working in her attic which didn't have a floor. So to me this seemed the perfect opportunity to do a portrait of Zandra because there she was the sitter right there where I was living. So this began, and she would come up to the attic, climb up the ladder - there was no staircase - and sit there for ... well, a couple of hours. But I'm afraid Zandra did have a tendency to go to sleep, so she would start nodding off and then I would have to use the matchsticks to wake her up! But we eventually got it done and I suppose the one that you see now represents that period, which I think someone once described it as made of pink bubble gum and I think that is actually a rather good description of it.

Where do you get your materials from?

The materials I use really come from all over the world. I've been working as a sculptor now in glass and mirror for over thirty-two years. So you find a lot just arrives, but there's a thin glass that I get from Thailand which they use on the temples and then there's painted glass as well. And then I work with a man in East End of London who also coats glass for me and the mirror is much thinner than normal mirror because obviously you don't make mirror thin or otherwise it would smash which is what people don't want, which I support very much.

Are your portraits a collaboration with the sitter?

Working with Lynn Seymour was very, very close, with all my sitters really I believe very much ... as I always say to all of my sitters: 'I am going to take part of your soul'. So for me it is a collaborative process whereby you both work together. Say for instance I might be working on the nose and it might have grown too long and I'll say to Lynn "Oh, what do you think?", "Oh" she says "too long!" so I'll chop it off. And this process really goes from the very beginning with the very first clay thing. To me, I don't like the idea of someone just sitting there rather pompously and you're sculpting away. It's a collaboration, it must be a collaboration, I can't see how else you can get a portrait of someone, you need to work together. Then when later on we were doing the metalwork, I'll never forget Lynn, we were bending the metal, and she suddenly said "No, no this drape isn't quite right!" and she leapt on the piece and pulled it and smashed it, so yes it was truly a collaborative process.

How did you realise the Lynn Seymour portrait?

The way I made the sculpture was Lynn sat for me, over a number of sittings, for a clay head i.e. it was a post with a lump of clay on top and you model this into the shape of her face. This was then cast in white resin and on this white resin I put the

hair on, which is painted glass set into another resin. And the eyes are little jewels you get from a jewellers shop and I take the backs off the jewels and then paint the colour of Lynn's eyes on the back and then I set this into resin. The paint that you see on the face is acrylic paint, because I very much like the idea of the face looking painted as opposed to being fleshy or real and this combines then into the head.

How important is colour in your work?

Well, I must say as an artist my great passion is colour, I *love* colour. I suppose the place I feel most at home with is India. As Diana Vreeland said "pink is the navy blue of India". And even my studio here is pink and orange and blue and green and many, many colours. For me my work is about celebration, celebration of life, the fact that we're all privileged to be living on this earth and so colours for me reflect this joy of living.