

## *Art and Mental State: An interpersonal approach to painting*

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My claim on your attention in presenting this subject is that I have been making paintings and looking at them for 40 years or so (rather longer than I've been doing child psychiatry!), and that what I will say comes from a cross-fertilisation between these two activities. In particular it stems from my earliest professional experience doing psychotherapy – when I was deeply taken by the fact that the quality and intensity of what happened in the room with a patient was strikingly similar to my experience while making paintings. Quite why that should be seemed to me at the time both important and mysterious. I will be exploring with you my subsequent reflections on this theme; that the link between the two experiences lies in our continuous efforts to understand others' minds and how this understanding can only come with a kind of engaged looking and reciprocal openness to be moved ourselves that we can call 'relating'. I will propose that paintings in fact carry much of their cultural power by being ways of embodying 'states of mind' within physical material. If this is true then it follows that our understanding of the processes involved in inferring states of mind in others can also be used to address how we respond to visual art. Our human facility for inferring the others' minds lies at the heart of our capacity to respond to paintings.

### **Empathy and 'mind reading'**

The moment in the room with the patient demands something intense and particular from the therapist; that he or she mobilise in a heightened form a capacity we are all familiar with; empathy with another's state of mind. How do we develop this capacity to share in the lives of others? Suppose you look at the right hand side and then left hand side of Plate 1 whilst remaining aware of your own emotional state. The internal change you experience in response to these different facial expressions is what we can call 'emotional resonance'. This is an everyday phenomenon but worth reflecting on in its complexity! After all, what is being connected here are two radically different things; one the visual image of another face and the other an internal experience of your emotion. Babies seem to be excellent at this capacity for emotional resonance from early life, suggesting that it



Plate 1: Courtesy of Professor Peter Fonagy, University College, London

is at least as much 'hard-wired' as learned. Part of the brain functioning underlying this ability (shown initially in primates with also emerging evidence in humans) may be so-called 'mirror neurons'; circuits in the brain that surprisingly appear to respond simultaneously to the perception of an observed movement in external space and the internal perception of the body itself doing a similar movement. The existence of this mirror neuron system seems to provide a neatly precise neurological basis for the capacity to imitate; a skill that is not otherwise easy to explain. It provides a model for how we may simultaneously observe the display of emotion on another's face and experience the same emotion internally oneself as empathy. In ontogeny, this capacity for emotional resonance forms the first bridge towards us sharing in another's mind.

But there is more to empathy than just emotional resonance. Imagine as you look at Plate 2 that you are an infant in a distressed state. On the left the watcher is simply imitating you (imagine what this would feel like!); on the right the man is not exactly mirroring your state – he seems instead to be aware of it while responding with sympathy. If you were distressed, looking at this second expression would be more comforting would it not? This second is what we can call 'marked mirroring': the other person is not imitating or 'feeling the same' as you and yet is clearly empathising with your state of mind. Indeed the very fact that he does clearly have a different experience to you is the root of why this is a more comforting response; it gives you the feeling of being psychologically 'held' by a separate person who is both caring about you and yet not himself subject to your own terror or distress; and who can therefore be assumed to be able to protect you. Exactly this is the core experience of the child with a trusted caregiver and lies at the heart of what we call 'attachment' in infancy.

From the perspective of the carer, this more developed view of empathy goes beyond simple imitation or emotional resonance. It includes the need for an awareness of the separateness and difference between minds, and the capacity to imagine the form and context of what they may be



Plate 2: Unmarked mirroring (left); Marked mirroring (right).  
Courtesy of Professor Peter Fonagy, University College, London

thinking. Infants have the imitative capacity from very early on (as every parent entranced by their infant's first social smile can testify), but this capacity to understand differences between minds (sometimes called the capacity for a 'theory of mind') is something that develops rather later (from about 18 months of age) and continues to develop through life (1,2). Furthermore, this new capacity in development inevitably goes along with something else; the beginning of a sense of self as different from others. And with that differentiation in turn comes the complimentary experience of a relationship between oneself and another, in what can be called 'inter-subjectivity' (3,4). Here, knowledge about another's mind and an experience of relating are inextricably linked, since this knowledge can only be achieved by actually putting oneself into relation to the other person and allowing oneself to be affected by them (this *being affected* gives us part of the information we need).

Plate 3 illustrates what a complex skill this everyday thing is when put together (and the truth behind the old saying that 'the eyes are window on the soul!'). Looking at the eyes at the top and experiencing how it feels to be in relation to them gives a huge amount of information about the mental state behind them. A warm person, probably a man in his 20's? One could develop an imagined narrative about him. In contrast, engaging with the eyes at the bottom is, I suggest, a rather different thing. Here's a woman probably slightly older and giving you a different sense of what's in her mind and what her attitude is towards you. When we 'read' mental states in this way we are intuitively making an inference beyond the immediate evidence in front of us; from what we see of the eyes into



Plate 3: '... and did thread our eyes, upon one double string.'  
Courtesy of Professor Peter Fonagy, University College, London

an understanding of the mind behind. This leap is key - and demands relating, since it is only by relating (opening oneself to be influenced by the other person) that you receive the information on which you can base an understanding; the knowledge and the action are interdependent. Feel yourself doing it! So part of the understanding is an initial quality of emotional resonance for which you have to open yourself to be influenced; but there is also an element of hard thinking and imagination in the perspective taking to intuit what is happening behind the eyes; '... and did thread our eyes, upon one double string.' (Donne).

Intuiting feeling through emotional resonance and intuiting form of thought through perspective taking ... mention of feeling and form brings me now to aesthetic experience.

#### Mind reading and art reading

My central proposition in relation to art is that works of art - in this case paintings - carry their cultural power by being ways of embodying states of mind using previously inert materials. The power of works of art and the reason for people to wish to create them is that states of mind thus embodied are held outside the normal flux of time and experience. Put this way, art is an extraordinary achievement. It can lead to small pieces of paint and canvas achieving almost limitless cultural value. In so far as the artist achieves this aim, it follows from the argument above that *the work of art will increasingly take on the capacity to be related to*. What is art

theory is commonly described as 'reading' a painting is I'm arguing an active process of intuiting which uses much of the same capacity as we use to intuit mental states in another. Just as intuiting the mental state of another is inevitably associated with relating to them, so intuiting the painting's 'mental life' is also associated with the (aesthetic in this case) experience of a relationship. It is this that constitutes the deep aesthetic satisfaction of experiencing works of art and what makes it a paradoxically human and humanising activity, even as it is apparently an activity in relation to an inanimate object.

I am going to develop this argument in three parts:

Firstly, I look at the way artists create and make meaning in paintings. Painting is particularly interesting because it is a non-verbal activity that proceeds largely outside language, until commonly at the end the image achieves a kind of autonomy and also a 'name' - in its title.

Secondly, I look at some empirical evidence that forms of art do indeed embody different states of mind by describing investigations of form in the drawings of normally developing children and children who have clinical disturbance.

Thirdly, I look at the process by which we 'read' a painting. Just as in development a young infant needs to be able to perceive whole forms out of disparate elements before they can develop a theory of mind, so someone 'reading' a painting has to intuit its formal structure before they can experience an aesthetic relationship with it. This intuition comes in a 'gestalt moment'; something similar to the experience we have in trying to understand another person's mind out of the plethora of sense impressions and communications that we receive.

So my central theme is that visual art embodies a state of mind using pictorial means. It is the formal coherence of the painting that carries this embodiment. And both to create and to creatively look at a painting requires that one puts oneself into a relationship with it.

## 1. Building up the Painting

### Starting - 'le petit sensation'

The impulse to begin a painting is usually experienced by the artist as a build up of an internal tension of some kind - either in front of the object to be painted or in relation to an internal state or imagined idea - leading to the need to start work. Cezanne called this his '*petit sensation*'; he regarded it as the secret key to his art, an experience intimate and private to be protected at all costs (5). Sometimes it has been talked about as if the impulse represents some internal energy or emotion that needs to be 'discharged'. I argue that it represents more in the way of a desire for or anticipation of a future relationship - that is the relationship that will be experienced by the artist with the planned work of art when it is finished. The aim of the painting is to make an object into which this emotion can

be directed - an 'other' to be at the other pole of the imagined relationship. Once this is achieved and the painting made, the starting impulse in the maker is assuaged. This is not exactly the same as saying the painting is an 'expression of the artist's emotions'. Rather that the painting is actually specifically made to be autonomous, to be different from oneself, because that is how one can have a relationship with it - an application of the idea of inter-subjectivity. To fulfil this role, however, a painting has to end up with enough aesthetic content to allow this imagined relationship to exist. The painting marks have to be made with a complexity and vividness sufficient to embody details of the artist's experience or feeling; then have to be combined together using pictorial (visual) logic to create a sufficiently coherent whole that can be related to. If the pictorial logic is absent, then the canvas contains an expressive mess, an expulsion or discharge, rather than the creation of an autonomous object: there would be no coherence and the object would not fill the criteria for an embodied state of mind (or an autonomous work of art). If there is plenty of pictorial logic but no affective charge or artistic valency, then the object has a kind of removed abstraction, which may satisfy at the level of geometry or maybe decoration, but not engage sympathy, empathy and relatedness in the viewer.

### *Affect traces*

The ways in which an artist links the marks made to his or her own emotional experience are various. They can involve a choice of colour, texture, line, and all the other means of expression. The logic here is that of a symbolic association or resonance. The choice of paint or colour or texture, anything that links the quality of material to an affect state, can be used. The painter Howard Hodgkin for instance bases his art on the capacity to recreate a strong affective charge within certain colours and shapes; recovering affect traces from his memories of specific situations - see his painting entitled *Lovers* for example at:

[www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/howardhodgkin/rooms/rooms7and8.htm](http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/howardhodgkin/rooms/rooms7and8.htm)

### *Pictorial logic*

Pictorial logical or visual grammar is a matter of aesthetics, and has been the subject of much writing, instruction and protocol. In an instructive example, the painter Paul Klee developed at the Bauhaus a teaching system based on the science of the time, including biology, geology and psychology, as well as the history of visual culture (6). He advocated building a picture step by step using an internally lawful visual logic which mirrored or reproduced the laws of nature. In this way the process of making the image is supposed to recapitulate in some way the natural processes underlying the nature of the subject. Such an idea can be seen at work in his painting 'Mountain Formation'. Here the method

of building up the painting proceeds firstly with a pattern of tone and colour gradients creating initial emphasis and momentum. Onto this background Klee places a rhythmic sequence of lines - one set curved and another set jagged. Two arrows (a device he often uses) are placed in such a way as to create a visual sense of shearing compression in the suite of curved lines; emphasising their stress and dynamism. Against this curvature is set off the jagged set of lines, juxtaposed in a way that gives a strong sense of momentum and energy to their sudden direction changes. It's then a small (but sudden) shift to read the curved lines as rock strata under compression and the zigzags as peaks thrust up under this force. Klee's method of making the picture generates a visual dynamic that embodies the idea of the process of formation of a mountain - and this in turn leads to the 'subject'. Indeed his writings suggest that he would have generated this form in the first instance in a playful or exploratory way without necessarily planning that it would be 'about' a mountain at all; then to find that the resulting image emerged as a mountain range. When this happens and a name (or subject) suggests itself, he said the painting is complete. The title 'Mountain Formation' thus refers both to the eventual subject of the image and the process of its formation (6). Such modernist theory and practice brings out clearly a general truth; that all painting essentially works at an abstract level, in terms of pictorial logic. When the abstract form and the subject of the work act in tandem the result is a powerful resonance.

#### *Building the painting*

So as paintings are made, affect traces or units of sensation are built up together according to the pictorial logic of visual grammar to form a coherent image. This process might involve as much taking apart as construction, as much archaeology as building, as much mess as clarity, as much destruction as construction. Some irreducible elements of truth in sensation and marking must be found and gradually built up together. The experience of building the painting is of generating symbolic equivalents for experience on the canvas and then putting experience (and thus at some level oneself too) together on the canvas. Destruction and construction on the canvas echo a sense of internal dynamic in the artist. In the end some coherence, both external and internal, is established. Two canvases of Cezanne, one *The Garden at Les Lauves, c.1906* left incomplete at an early stage:

[www.artchive.com/artchive/C/cezanne/garden.jpg.html](http://www.artchive.com/artchive/C/cezanne/garden.jpg.html)

the other, *Chateau Noir c.1904* more tightly finished

[www.superstock.com/stock-photos-images/475-1054](http://www.superstock.com/stock-photos-images/475-1054),

illustrate the progression.

In contrast to Klee, Cezanne here builds marks on the canvas in response to what he observes in the external world in the moment. However as he tightens the picture, pushes the marks forward, and builds the inter-relationships on the canvas, it is these inter-relationships that become the foreground concern. They grow in intensity both in terms of form and colour and, while never losing contact with the observed reality, the constructed representation begins to have its own life. An interesting issue in Cezanne is the focus or goal towards which this patterning is pushing; for as it intensifies and deepens, as the texture becomes more complex, the emotional resonance actually becomes clearer and simpler. His paintings are firstly empirical and inductive, that is they depend upon intensive close observation of natural phenomena, and are impossible to imagine without such close attention. But the natural phenomena are not really there for the purpose of description, rather it is the process of looking itself that becomes the point; the increasing coherence of the image becomes an expression of the observing self. The emotionality quietsens as it becomes more stable, as if the intensity of observation breaks through into a kind of meditative state, tapping into resonant areas of deep experience - and it is these then that form the mental life of the painting.

#### *The painting 'speaks'*

As a painting proceeds the focus typically progressively shifts from the internal state in the artist to a concern with the organisation of the painting itself. More and more time is spent just looking at the canvas. Most artists then talk of a point where then the painting begins to acquire an autonomous existence and 'speaks back' to the painter. Here the direction of energy in a sense reverses and painters become more aware of themselves in front of the canvas, and of the relationship between them and the canvas, than of themselves and the object that initially inspired it. This is the point at which Klee described the painting as 'breaking into language' and giving him its title: 'it names itself' he said (6). Hodgkin says that 'My pictures are finished when the subject comes back' (7). The increasingly autonomous nature of the visual image is marked by its coherence, and complexity. Here the artist/observer gets something back from the image: most likely something unexpected, since the pictorial logic developed to its full extent is going to embody more and different things than might have been expected beforehand. It will contain an element of surprise, adventure, and expansion.

There is an analogy possible here between this notion of the painting getting to a point of self-naming or 'breaking into language', and the developmental emergence of language in children, depending on a necessary and sufficient cognitive competence. From 18 months the child becomes increasingly mentally autonomous, capable of symbolic representation, and in a linked way, increasingly verbal. At the same time, in becoming more autonomous and aware of self, the child becomes more

consciously able to relate. This idea of individuation and relatedness can also apply to the visual image. People talk about the image acquiring 'life' at this time: I translate this as the painting increasingly becoming able to embody mental life. The painter Chagall used to place a flower next to his developing painting; when the texture and 'presence' of the painted surface matched that of real flower he felt it was developing this kind of threshold complexity he needed.

The greatest completed images allow such a richness of relationship in this way that they can evoke the deepest feelings of interpersonal relating of which we are capable, although held within this strange reflective aesthetic state. The art object becomes available to give others a similar experience of relating; it becomes autonomous and multi-potential. It makes concrete a symbolic representation apart from the flux of time and distils experience into a form that can be shared (8).

## 2. Childrens' Drawings as Expressions of Mental States

Is there any empirical evidence to support this idea that formal aspects of visual art are associated with mental states? Drawing is a prime means of expression for the young school age child and drawing analysis has a long history in assessment and treatment within child mental health, but there have been few contemporary studies into the phenomenology of drawings and their predictive validity with psychopathology. With students I undertook an analysis of drawings in a total of 151 children (9). For the analysis of the drawings we used *single indicators* of content (such

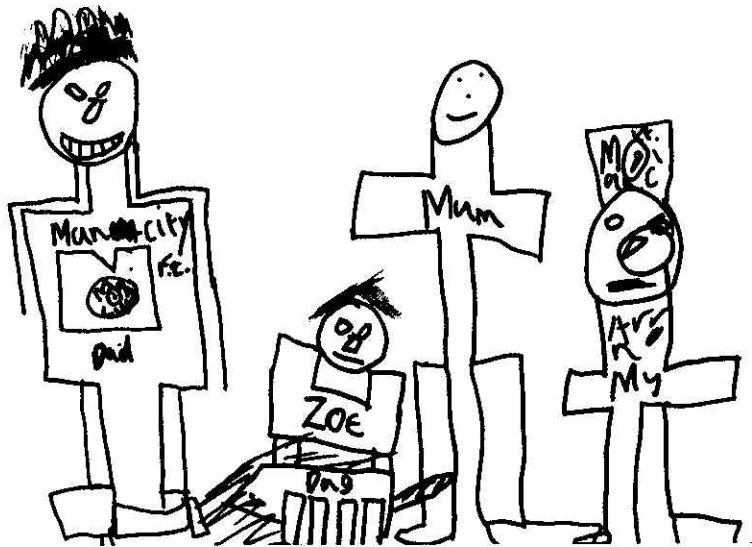


Plate 4: Child drawing showing 'bizarre' coding (collection of the author)

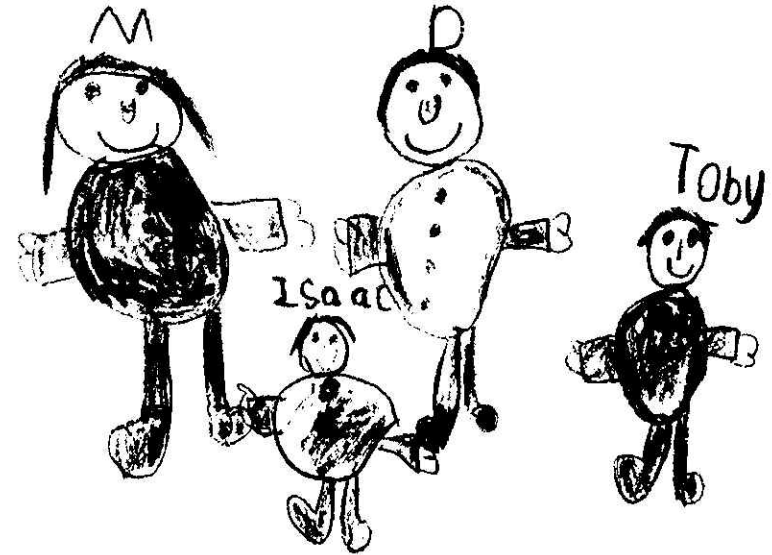


Plate 5: Child drawing showing 'happiness' coding (collection of the author)



Plate 6: Child drawing showing 'enmeshment' (collection of the author)

as omission of body parts, exaggeration of features, figures separated by barriers etc); and *global ratings* such as 'Bizarreness' (for instance, complex grotesque contained fantasy themes or unusual signs or symbols); 'Happiness' (warmth and vitality of the drawing, family represented as an integrated unit); 'Emotional Isolation' (degree of physical and represented emotional distance between the figures) – and we were able to get agreement between us in rating these.

In one study, we compared family drawings of 25 clinically referred children 5-7 years of age and 65 non-referred children of the same age in regular schools. In a second complimentary study, we analysed drawings from a different clinically referred group (61 children aged 4-10 yrs) in relation to parental reports of their mental health. 'Bizarre' forms in drawings (for instance Plate 4) were seen very significantly more often in the clinical groups compared to non-referred (along with some single indicators such as 'omission of body parts') – and associated with greater severity in parent reports of their child's difficulties. 'Happiness' type forms (for instance in Plate 5) on the contrary was associated with the non-clinical group and parents' rating of low emotional symptoms. Forms showing overlapping closeness of mother and child (for instance in Plate 6) were consistently associated with high rates of maternal depression.

These studies suggest that a systematic analysis of the *form* of children's drawings relates to measured aspects of their *mental state*. While the equivalent analysis in relation to adult art is inevitably more complex (and certainly influenced also by aspects of shared cultural style at a particular time); much literature suggests that similar relationships between form and mental state can be identified (10).

### 3. Reading the Painting

In this section I argue that, whereas building the image is a process of generating form out of the intuition of an imagined relationship, so a visitor 'reading' the image reverses this process by generating the feeling of a relationship out of an intuition of form. In this way, reading or unlocking the potential of a painting is rather like an exercise in reading a mental state or experiencing a relationship with it. The experience of the relationship is the aesthetic pleasure of the work. I argue that we use the same capacities to do this that we have developed to intuit other people's minds. That is an intuition of coherent wholes, the recognition of the gestalt, empathy for effective communication, attention to detail, receptiveness and concentration.

#### Perplexity and attentiveness

The initial experience of the confrontation with a new painting is quite possibly an initial perplexity or uncertainty. This is similar I think to the experience well described by the psychiatrist Robin Skynner talking about his emotions as a therapist at first being in a room with a new family

(11). Skynner describes the need to tolerate this uncertainty without foreclosing into preconceptions or premature conclusions. It is a process I suppose that is similar to the one that Keats described as 'negative capability'; the ability to 'experience without an unreasonable searching after fact and reason'. As one tolerates this uncomfortable sense of not knowing, whilst still keeping alert with a free floating attention, one is picking up and evaluating and relating individual parts, testing out correspondences and formal relationships; evaluating forms of expression, movement, and voice; the linkage of modes of expression, inconsistencies, coherences, incongruities; the interpretation of facial expression in the light of one's internal sensation; testing a reaction again in oneself against the evidence of one's eyes. Over time we may develop a more solid, substantial and reliable picture of our interpretation of the other's mental state based on numerous small isolated pieces of evidence, intuited and synthesised together into a coherent experience of the other's mental intentions.

This is a coherent image then which is suddenly meaningful, 'makes sense', and is accompanied by an intuition of the other person's mental state.

A similar experience is possible in front of a new painting. Sometimes it may make sense immediately and unequivocally without any doubt. More often the elements of the painting or the apparent image take time to make sense (paintings often do take time, and why not? We might spend weeks reading a novel). Thus in front of Piero della Francesca's famous painting of the '*Flagellation of Christ*' c.1455

[www.artchive.com/artchive/P/piero/flagella.jpg.html](http://www.artchive.com/artchive/P/piero/flagella.jpg.html)

the initial impression is of a perplexing contrast between the apparent harmony of the overall image and a striking discontinuity; an odd apparent juxtaposition between the foreground group of figures to the right and the recessed interior flagellation scene on the left. It is almost as if there are two separate images in one held together in some sort of underlying unity that is not immediately apparent. It took me considerable time of looking at the local relationships of form and wondering about them before I realised that the key to the paradox lay in the perspective – what unifies these disparate tableaux in formal terms is the fact that they are contained within one perspective system. The lines of recession – following for instance the line of the rooftop at the upper right, the line of the black marbled roof element down the top left, the lines up the pattern of the marbled flooring – all lead to a single vanishing point in the darkness just to the right of the right hip of the man with the whip. The vanishing point is exactly on the vertical bisection of the picture, but located in darkness. The only figurative connection is that it is directly beneath the vertical line of the flagellating whip (the named subject of the painting). Given this key a myriad of other formal associations and unexpected correspondences between apparently dissimilar parts of the work reveal themselves – particularly horizontally between the two

parts of the painting. There is not space here to develop the full symbolic and formal meaning of this work; save to say that the coherence developed around the perspective system gradually reveals I think an intention in the painting linking to present and past, memory and conscience, morality and expediency. The group to the right seem to relate to external and present; the recessed flagellation scene to planes of memory, history, interiority and conscience. The perspective functions as much more than a means of generating an illusion of pictorial depth; it is the means of articulating the painting's thinking. My point is that it is necessary to have penetrated this formal structure for the painting to reveal itself. And the experience of 'relating' to the image when this is discovered? That is for each viewer to say; but for me an aesthetic thrill - along with the sense of emotion as when things kept conveniently apart collapse together; an ache, an anxiety, but a sense of the real.

A different kind of perceptual gestalt leading to meaning is illustrated in Howard Hodgkin's painting of Keith and Kathy Sachs.

[www.howard-hodgkin.com/exhibitionproduct.php?exhibitions=48&imgid=2386](http://www.howard-hodgkin.com/exhibitionproduct.php?exhibitions=48&imgid=2386)

If you first look at this painting fresh without pre-knowledge, it is just an abstract assembly of shapes and colours. Then add the verbal part of the painting (i.e. the title) and the knowledge that it is a double portrait of two art collectors. The abstract shapes suddenly click into different focus. This changed perception form transforms our response - we intuit a mental life in the image (human personality and relationships). The radical shift in our feelings here is a measure of the power of the image to embody mental life.

Formal analysis of a painting may thus be a first pre-condition for understanding its internal organisation and emotional communication. But this in itself may or may not be enough; often some more detailed knowledge of iconography or background is useful to complete an intuition as a whole and deepen our relationship to the image. We need to be able to infer the meaning of individual parts through cultural understanding of what is being symbolised, attention to detail, understanding the iconography of the image.

#### *Difficulties in relatedness and the intuition of form – the case of autism*

This link between the intuition of formal coherence and mental state is highlighted in a situation where there are difficulties in both areas: that is in the study of children with autism, who find both 'mind reading' and relating particularly difficult. Two aspects of failure to mind-read in autism are salient here. One is the difficulty in intuiting wholes (the failure of so-called 'central coherence'); the other is the capacity to read social signals or affective meaning. Children with autism often have great difficulty intuiting overall wholes - they can see local connections but not an overall gestalt or 'central coherence'. This difficulty intuiting

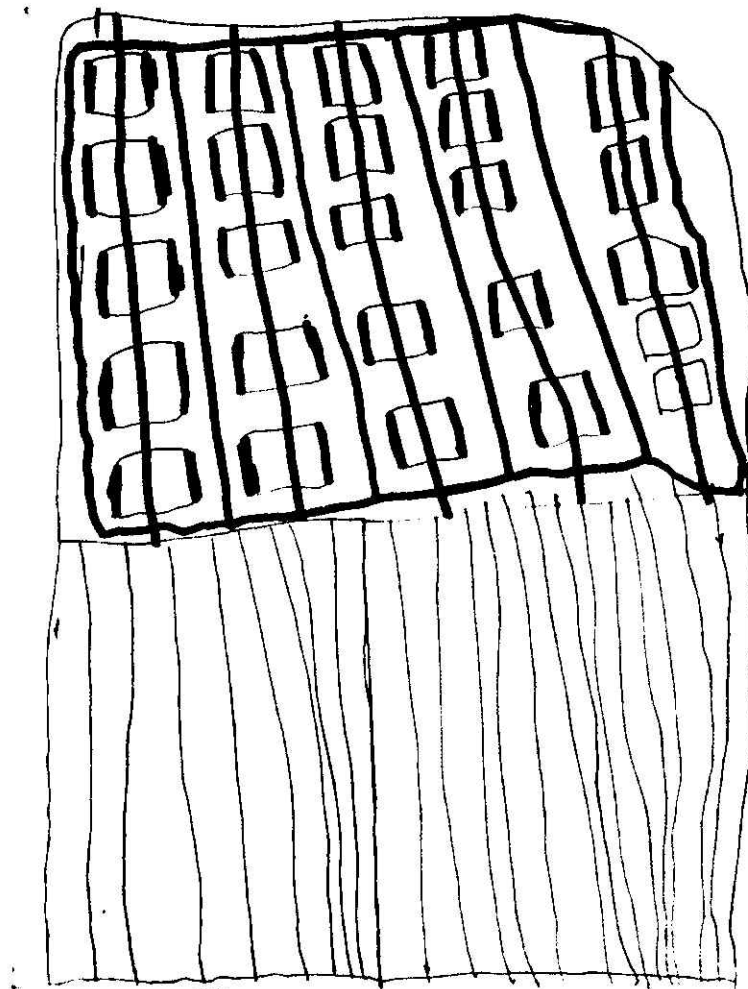


Plate 7: Drawing by a child with autism (collection of the author)

coherence is a key component of their difficulty in intuiting mental states and relating. And it is also often seen in the characteristic forms of their art expression (Plate 7 is a 10 year old autistic boy's representation of the gates of Buckingham Palace).

#### *Post modernism*

This idea of direct engagement with painting - both on the part of the artist and the part of the viewer; the idea that there is a unified single authorial voice or meaning in the work with an emphasis on authen-

ticity, is characteristic of a particular style of art. By apparent contrast, the years since the mid 20th century have been dominated by something apparently rather different: an ironic and knowing distance of artist from work; a constant qualification of passion or engagement and a spirit of self-reflexiveness. On the face of it, this 'post-modernism' fatally undermines the idea of the importance of 'intuiting the whole' and 'reading a painting' that I have outlined above. But there may be more to it than this. The introduction of a self-reflexiveness into experience is not just something that has happened in art criticism; it has also been characteristic of much contemporary thought within psychiatry, psychology and human sciences. What can we learn from this?

Cindy Sherman's '*Untitled Film Stills*' are a good place to start consideration of post-modernism in this context. The overt content of Sherman's multiple photographic series are usually women in a variety of 'iconic' poses or situations; such as pin ups or fashion models, seductive librarians, domestic drudges, rebellious teens, film idols. As one looks more it is apparent that, curiously, each is Sherman herself, cleverly made up and acting the role. Look longer and a number of more troubling complexities are revealed. She subtly presents each image within a context that undermines it; at the same time engaging the viewer reflexively in a disturbing sense of what he or she might be assuming, enjoying, or judging while looking. The image, one's look as a viewer, her look *at* the viewer, one's self awareness of one's own gaze – over multiple images all this becomes challenging in the most subtle way; as to how we create, judge and react to identity in ourselves and others. The presentation of paradox in an image put forward within a context that undermines it, a smile allied by coldness in the eyes, are all experiences of the more subtle end of social communication. After all, irony and sarcasm are mental states. As one gets to understand the layers and the resonances and the self-referential nature of this kind of work, one's understanding of the unitary image alters. To the simple relationship to the intuited image is added a reflexive awareness of the context of that relationship. This series then is not actually of film stills but rather of constructions which give



Plate 8: *Visual Field*: Jonathan Green

the viewer an experience which has a typical kind of post modern flavour which is that you are both pulled in and pulled out - made to reflect on your experiences at the same time as experiencing them. This I suggest is a good function for art works in our time, when in our current complex multi cultural environment we are forced into flexibility of perception - to use our empathetic and perspective-taking skills to the maximum. Relating to this kind of work give us an experience of that and it also perhaps helps expand these empathetic and perspective-taking skills - in a way that, as I suggested earlier, we have been learning to do since the earliest moments in infancy when we began to see other faces and to yearn to understand the person behind them.

### Acknowledgements

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