

# SHERYL HIGH FACES



**2021**

EXHIBITED AT THE GREENHOUSE GALLERY AT GUERNSEY MUSEUM, CANDIE GARDENS . 6TH AUGUST - 19TH SEPTEMBER 2021



## Acknowledgements

Lady Corder, Patron of The Arts Foundation Guernsey.  
Christopher Beaumont, The Seigneur of Sark. For opening the exhibition FACES.

Guernsey Arts - Russ Fossey and Monika Drabot (for all your hard work done behind the scenes and for giving me the opportunity to showcase my work, as well as so many other artists)

Arts Foundation Guernsey - Melissa Mourton (for everything you do, from promoting me, to your never ending kindness, support and friendship)

I would also like to thank Jess Hester, for building my beautiful studio (I've loved being "lost in there") and for promoting me to anyone who would listen!

And last but not least, thank you for coming to see my work, I'm so grateful to you all.



Sheryl High

## FACES

I've always loved drawing and painting, I have an uncle who was an artist in Zimbabwe where I grew up. He used to encourage his eldest daughter and I to try to "out draw/paint" each other, from as far back as I can remember, and then our parents would give us a score that evening. I'm pretty sure it was a way of keeping us busy and quiet, but the side effect was we both learnt a lot about colour and interpretation from an early age and also learnt to love art! (I won't bring up the mock boxing ring they used to set up for us when we were fighting.. but Michelle is still one of my favourite people!)

I was lucky enough to attend a high school in Harare with an incredible art department, and was fortunate to have a teacher who gave everything she had to give to her class, and as a result most of us received A's for our O levels. The days spent in her art department were the days I lived for.

Fast forward to adulthood and it's a blur of interior-design, graphic design, a little ceramic painting and having children, and then back to 3 years of private tutoring, again with an incredible lady who improved my techniques and ironed out strange and bad habits. This is the period where I built up the courage to tackle "faces" because it's the one aspect of art where you're either "right or wrong!" (well that's my opinion, anyway) I absolutely love portraiture, especially painting eyes. I love abstracts too, and that's how some of my portraits evolved into abstract faces, but I am hell bent on making sure the person is still recognisable even if they are a swirl of unusual colours and shapes. My happiest days are spent painting, with my favourite music floating around me, I lose track of time completely.

Early in my career I received commissions to paint high profile South African politicians, including Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo, Jacob Zuma and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. I wasn't sure my zoomed in/close up, huge face studies would be well received; however my fears were allayed when the Oliver Tambo portrait, which is massive and entirely Mr Tambo's face, was chosen to hang in The Thabo Mbeki Presidential Library. The other large portraits also hang in prominent parliamentary buildings. So my love of faces has paid off!

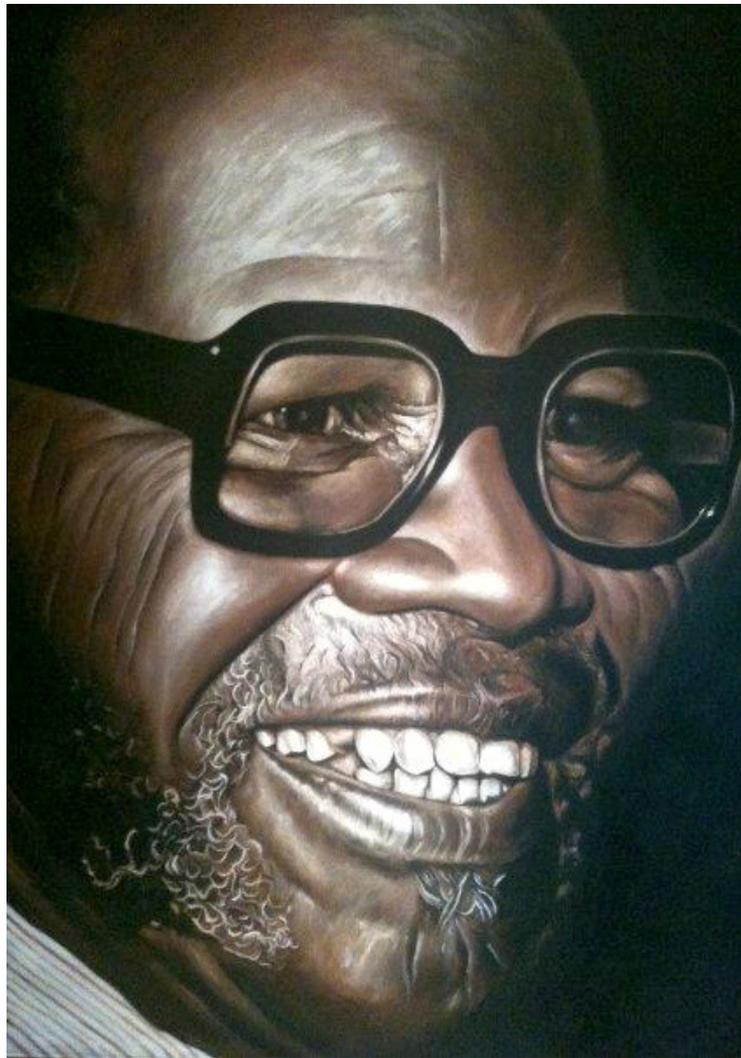
My goal is to get back to painting full time, my happy place is in front of an easel. Portraiture is still my first love, followed closely by abstracts and flowers.

Thank you for taking the time to view my exhibition, I hope you all enjoyed it. Before you leave, please be kind enough to take a moment to write one word or a sentence to let me know if a certain piece or the collection "evokes" any particular emotion in you, on the loose page provided and pop it in the box.



**Nelson Mandela and Jacob Zuma** ... 2 commissions for the South African Government. Pictured here with Mr Zweli Mkhize, the South African Minister of Health.

Acrylic and oil on Canvas.



O. R. Tambo (27.10.17 - 24.4.93)  
Commissioned by Arts and Culture S.A.  
Now hanging in the Thabo Mbeki Presidential  
Library in Johannesburg.

Acrylic and oil on Canvas  
1.6m x 1m

“Faces of friendship precision caution, suavity, ideality,  
The spiritual-prescient face, the always welcome  
Common benevolent face,  
The pure extravagant, yearning, questioning artist’s face,  
The ugly face of some beautiful soul, the handsome detested  
Or despised face,  
The sacred faces of infants, the illuminated face  
Of the mother of many children”  
(Faces – Walt Whitman)

When Sheryl High first contacted me to inform me of her forthcoming exhibition entitled “FACES” I was reminded of the poem “Faces” from Walt Whitman’s Leaves of grass. It was not only the poems in that book that fascinated me and captured my imagination but also the iconic portrait of the bearded poet himself on the book’s cover. The exhibition is aptly named in the environment of a rapidly changing world where Covid-19 has had a destructive psychological and social effect on the population. The “new normal” of social distancing and the mandatory use of face masks in the public spaces has impacted the role of facial expressions and how we read and communicate emotions with each other when we cannot see the whole face. On the cover of “Leaves of grass”, Whitman’s face is staring at the viewer as if to say, “I see your face”.. a reminder of one of the faces painted by Sheryl High on her body of work consisting of portraits of cultural and political icons. Her art integrates what a face means as a medium and material and ways a human face is embedded in specific cultural, social, aesthetic contexts and what the face tells about an individual.

I first saw Sheryl High’s work on a photo of her posing with Dr Zweli Mkhize, (the South African Minister of Health and former Premier of Kwa-Zulu Natal) and an arresting portrait of Nelson Mandela and Jacob Zuma which he had commissioned her to paint. I was intrigued by the work and I still recall thinking how well executed the portrait was and how painterly the artist was. I was the curator at Sandton Art Gallery, Johannesburg, I commissioned Sheryl High to do a portrait of the great O. R. Tambo, who was an anti-apartheid stalwart and a venerable leader of the African National Congress ANC, for an exhibition I was curating. Tambo’s name was bestowed as an official name of the biggest airport on the continent of Africa – The O. R. Tambo International Airport situated in Johannesburg. To understand the daunting task that Sheryl High faced in capturing the soul of a leader and the reverence the country had towards Tambo – the role he played in the South African political landscape one has to quote a commitment Nelson Mandela made during his funeral. He said, “Go well, my brother and farewell dear friend. As you instructed, we will bring peace to our dear land. As you strived, we will restore the dignity of the dehumanised”. Today the O. R. Tambo portrait hangs in The Thabo Mbeki Presidential Library, a space of excellence, research, discourse and cultural exchange located in Johannesburg and designed by Ghanaian-British architect Sir David Adjaye OBE.

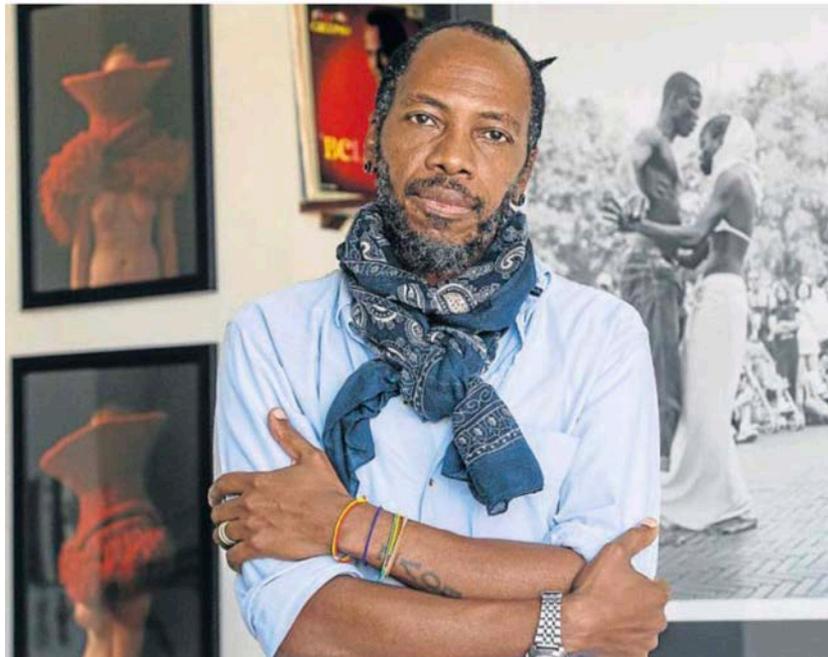
Sheryl High has chosen the tradition of portraiture as a visual journey in a genre that has often been seen as purely representational, but her work is a testament of her imaginative transition between the subject, the artist and the viewer. The gravitas and complexity of her series of portraits of some of the individuals (she has done commissions of some of the most influential South Africans including Archbishop Emeritus Tutu) who gave South Africa hope and navigated it out of the darkness of apartheid. Sheryl's portraits of these icons capture their essence with dignity and intimacy.

Since she left South Africa, her work now reveals the intersection of, on the condition of an outsider, a painter from South Africa now residing in Britain who could express her soul through her art. If one is to appreciate Sheryl High's works, one must recognise how precisely, with what concentration she lays bare a complex expressiveness of the face, giving viewers a handhold on which to build even more readings of their own.

## Andile Magengelele

Andile Magengelele.

Switzerland based, South African curator and a writer. I am a cultural all rounder and have been involved on different levels within the visual arts sector. I have worked for Department of Arts and Culture in South Africa on visual arts policy unit and later as a member of an advisory task team advising the Minister of Arts I have curated various exhibitions of artists from the continent of Africa and its Diaspora. I was for six years on the Acquisition Committee of Johannesburg Art Museum and also a member of the Museum Committee. I participated as member of a Venice Biennale Selection Committee for six years and also on the Funding Board of the South African National Arts Council. I came to arts seeking refuge and beauty. I am passionate about literature, architecture and design. I have traveled extensively giving talks on art in tertiary institutions and art fairs including JHB Art Fair, Cape Town Art Fair, Basel Art Fair and Santa Fe. I am a dedicated father of two boys whose unconditional love inspire me in my daily life.



**Sir Richard Collas. MBE**

**89th Bailiff of Guernsey  
between 2012 - 2020**

Acrylic on Canvas



**Christopher Beaumont**  
**The Seigneur of Sark**

Acrylic on Paper



**“The Rock of hospitality. A month’s work here is worth a year in Paris”**

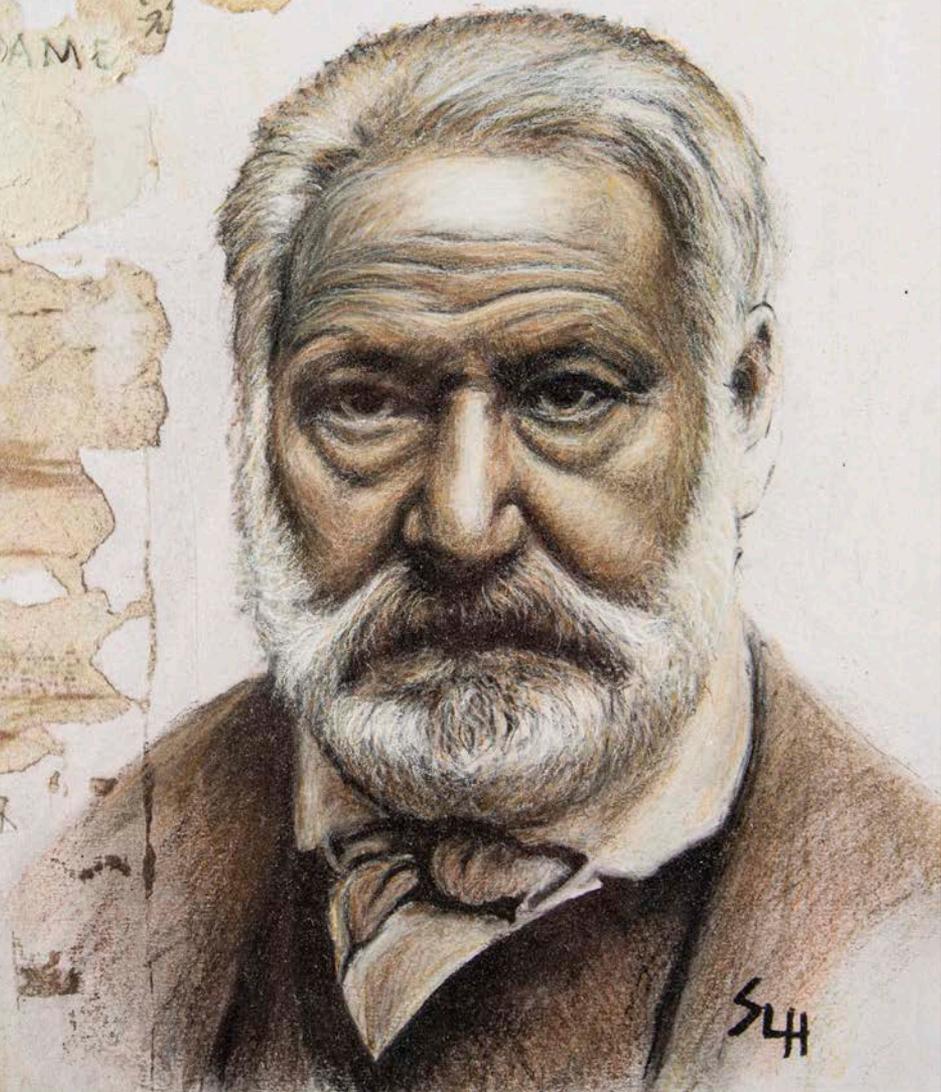
Victor Hugo

**Sark and Guernsey definitely ignite a spark of creativity in a person!**

Sheryl High

j'ai écrit les quatre premières  
pages de Notre Dame de Paris le 25 juillet  
1830. la révolution de juillet m'ins-  
pirait une "bonne pensée" (qu'on  
me pardonne !)

NOTRE-DAME  
DE  
PARIS



SH



**Duncan Spence**

Acrylic on Paper



**Amy Spence**

Acrylic on Paper





Acrylic on Canvas  
1.5 x 1m

**“Art enables us to find ourselves and lose ourselves at the same time”**

Thomas Merton

Acrylic on Canvas  
1m - 1m







Acrylic on Canvas  
1.3m - 50cm

**Carl Hester. MBE**

**Olympian**  
**Medals in Team Dressage**

London 2012 - Gold

Rio de Janeiro 2016 - Silver

Tokyo 2020 - Bronze

Acrylic on Canvas

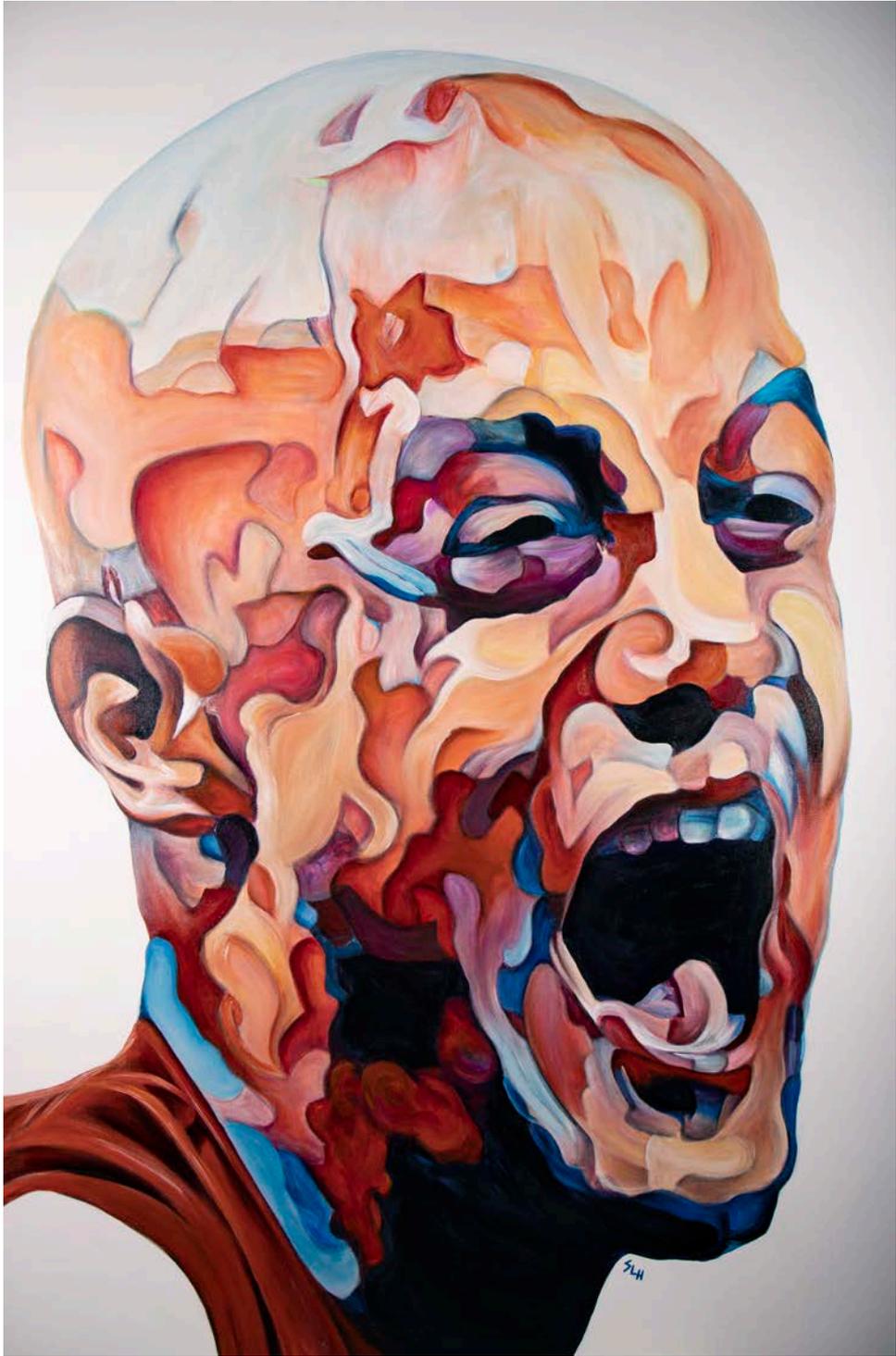
1m - 1m



## **Vincent Kompany**

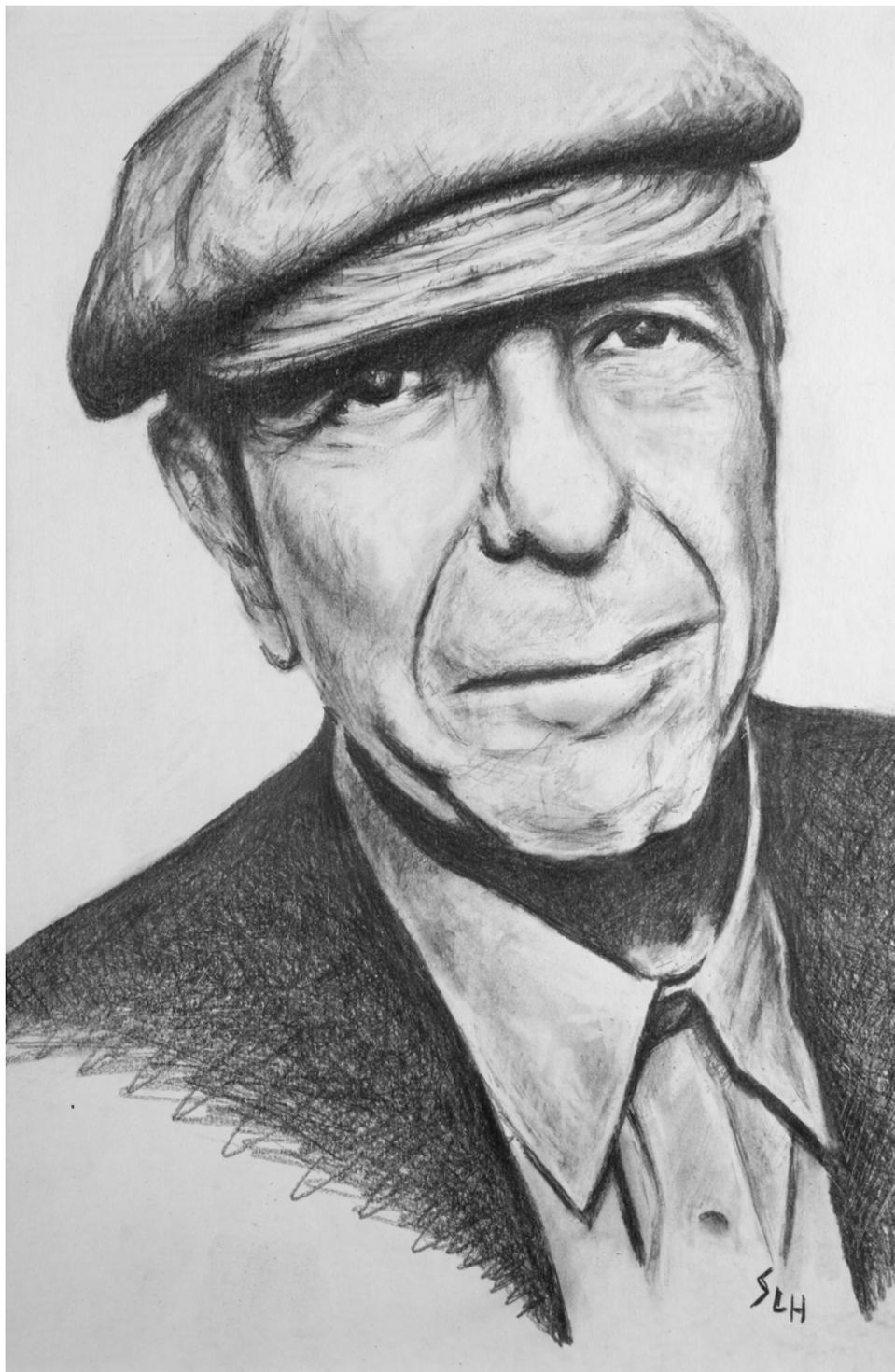
Footballer and philanthropist. Commissioned by his top fan in Guernsey, Ian Morellec and kindly lent back to me for the exhibition. The colours chosen to represent the colours of the 2 teams he played for, Manchester City and Belgium, and his expression to show his passion for his sport.

Acrylic on Canvas.





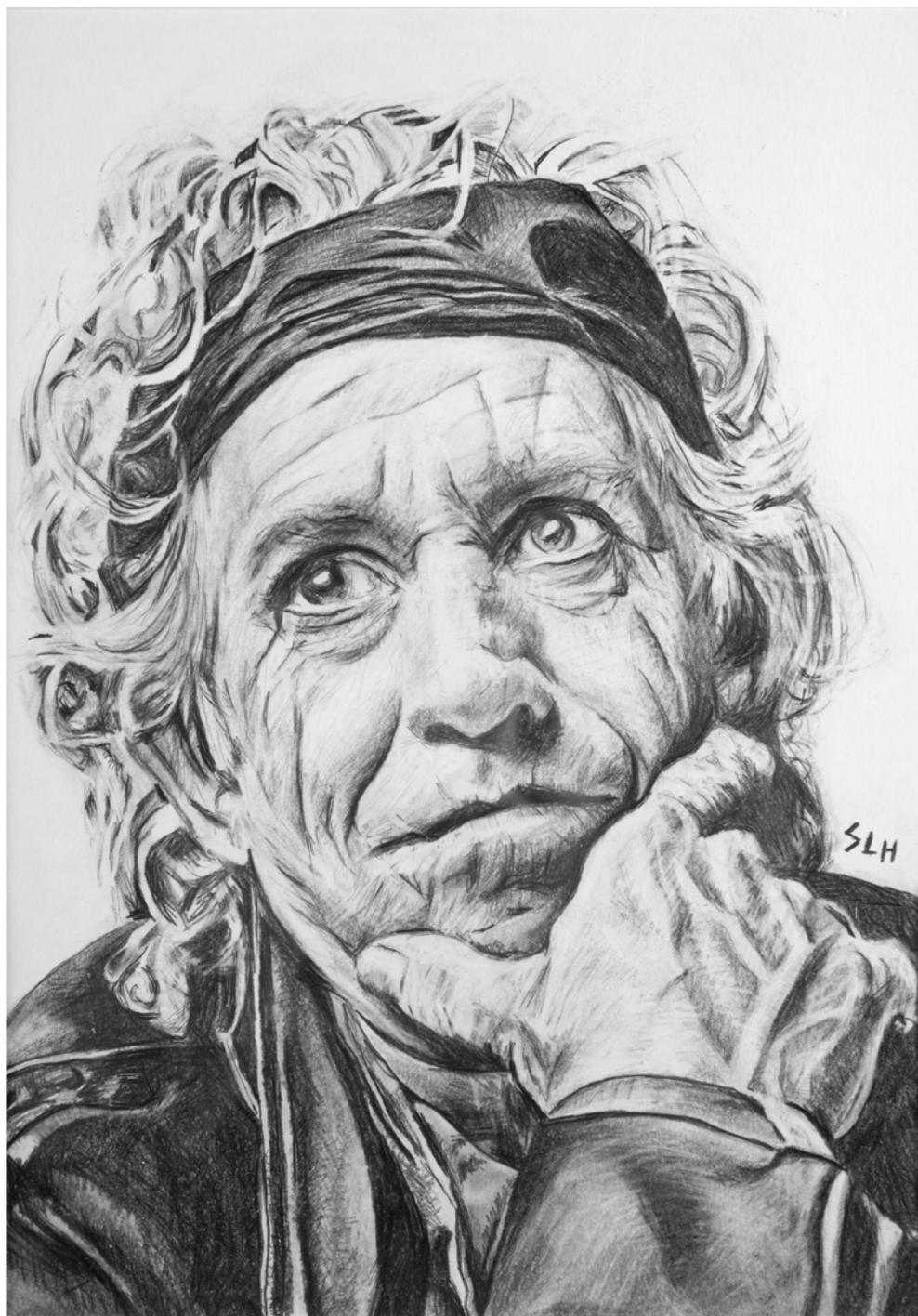
**Jess Hester**  
Acrylic on Canvas



**Leonard Cohen**  
Pencil on Paper

**“ You see, to me, the art of music is listening to it, not playing it. The real art of it is hearing it.”**

Keith Richards



Keith Richards  
Pencil on Paper

**“When the world becomes a massive mess with nobody at the helm, it’s time for artists to make their mark.”**

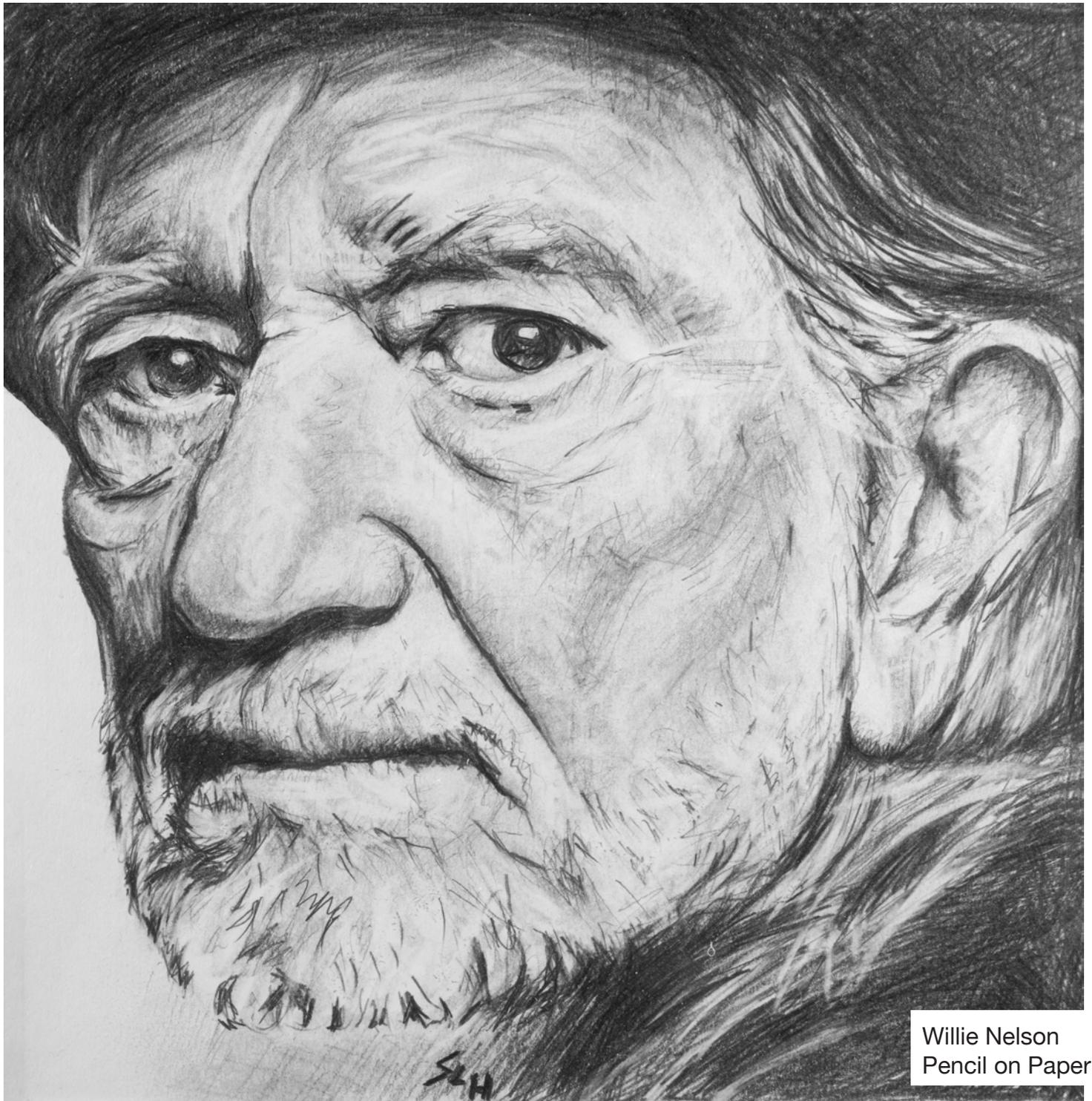
Joni Mitchell



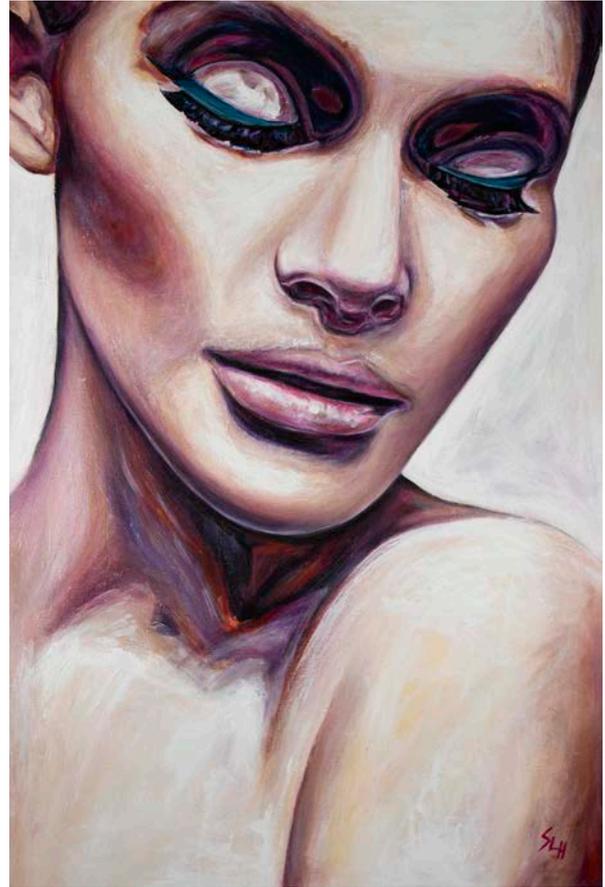
Joni Mitchell  
Pencil on Paper

**“If you wait for tomorrow to follow your dreams,  
by the time that you get there they’re gone.”**

Willie Nelson



Willie Nelson  
Pencil on Paper



Acrylic on Canvas



Crayons on Paper

**Parrot Tulips**

Commission for  
Melissa Mourton

Acrylic on Canvas

1.50m - 1m







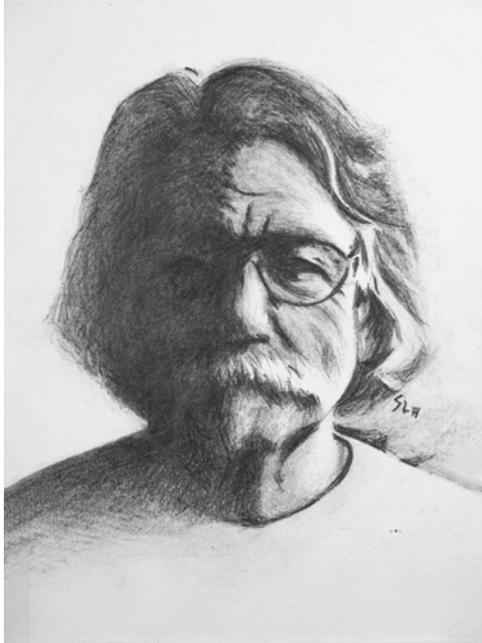


Acrylic on Canvas  
1.20m x 50cm



**Commissions also done on request.  
Please contact me if you require any further information.**

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+44 7781 435766**



Jess Hester  
Pencil on Paper

