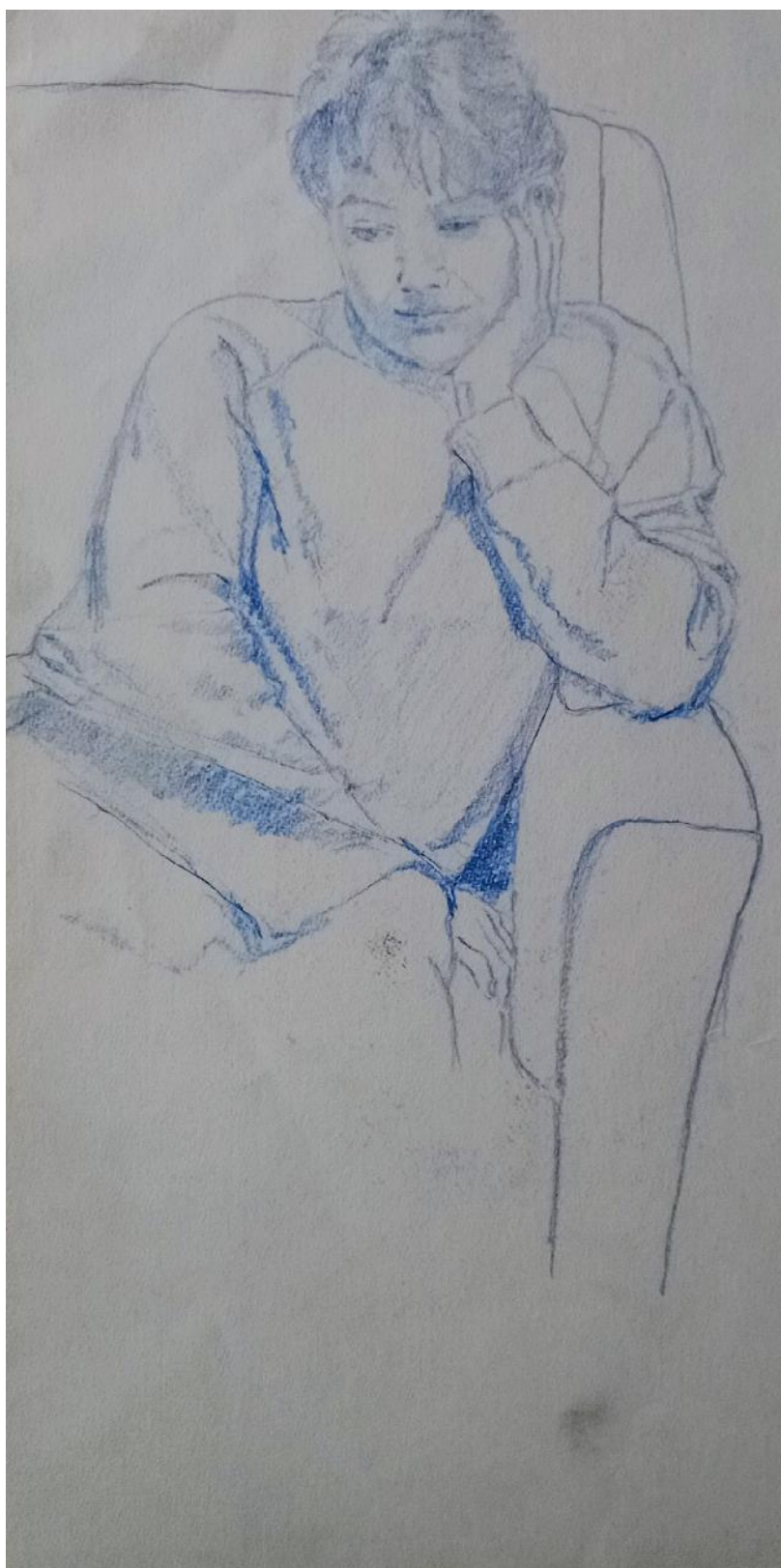


I grew up in Winchester in Hampshire, UK.

People were nicer in art class. We got a sketchbook. I drew a boot, and people liked it. My brother sat for me for hours and it was a good drawing. I was proud of my sketchbook. Then someone stole it. But that was OK, it proved I was good.

I went to Manchester, studied librarianship.
Big mistake.

Slide 1 Sara



Going to life-drawing classes, and drawing portraits in pencil to cheer myself up, forget I was studying librarianship. Blue pencil.

I had this melancholy feeling I'd missed my vocation.

After library studies ended and I barely got a pass, I came back to Winchester to live with my parents. Saved up and went travelling round Europe – a Europass. Two museums a day. I remember going up the lift to the Musee D'orsay one afternoon after I'd done the Louvre in the morning. Exhausting.

Eventually went to London. I became a subtitler of captions for deaf people – people watching TV shows read the dialogue at the bottom of the screen. So, screenwork. Keyboard, listening. Typing in what is said. Infinite patience. Not the news - pre-prepared stuff.

We met some deaf people. I did realise then how isolating it can be.

The idea is that the subtitles flow naturally, unobtrusively, in sync with the dialogue.

I started to think about doing some part-time art courses on days off. To be honest, a friend pushed me into it.

I did a class with the City Literary Institute, who did part-time classes. It was called something like Urban Landscape. I was on the South Bank, drawing staircases. Then I redrew them on a big scale with ink and a ton of charcoal.

1999. I went and did a Fine Art Portfolio Course. A foundation equivalent, so I could apply to do a degree at the end of it. Two evenings a week and every other Saturday. They showed us Mark Rothko. I thought it might be possible for me to be a painter.

I loved the City Lit. It had been around for a while, the buildings had character. The main one was on Fleet Street, up about a million flights of stairs.

One evening a teacher said too much blue can kill your painting. I remember her saying “Michael, I am trying to help you.” I did think then, actually she is trying to help me.

We had a show at the end and another students asked our teacher Peter Stanyer, or Stan, which painting he liked best. He said mine.

I went on to do a degree in Fine Art at London Metropolitan University. Formerly John Cass. Opposite the Whitechapel Art Gallery, and near Brick Lane. A tougher environment.

I was a mature art student. I liked being an art student.

We used to have these seminars where we talked about the themes and concepts that ran through our work.

Not many people seemed to be drawing. The idea was you had the idea, and what materials expressed that best?

So, the teachers were pretty conceptual. They had ties to the Museum of Installation in Deptford, which I never went to. Which I regret.

I said I liked to go to the same place and draw it because it had an atmosphere. The teacher said it didn't have an atmosphere, that was something I brought there with me. I realised he was right.

I was into abstraction and Rothko. Lots of charcoal. This teacher said a figurative painting could have abstract relationships. Relationships of colour, line, shape. That idea stayed with me too. A figurative painting can have abstract relationships.

I was a part-time art student for five years.

Slide 2 and 3





Etchings done in 2004, London, near Lambeth North tube station, where I worked. Drawn in my lunch hour – well, painted with a brush dipped in white spirit onto wax on zinc, and the zinc plate etched and printed in the workshop at London Met.

I should mention the printmaking teachers, David Skingle and Nigel Oxley. Nice guys. David said other teachers there might not say this but go with my gut.

We had to share the space with the screenprinters. They used some device that looked like a big gun to clean their screens, and it made a sound in the print room like getting your tooth drilled but much louder.

So, the etchings make me think of standing by the side of the road with my sandwich and etching plate. The sandwich had a lot of mayonnaise on. It was from a health shop on Lower Marsh, not far from Waterloo. Sometimes a cat sat on the counter.

In the print room I looked at my etchings in the rack with other people's work and realised my work fell under the category of urban landscape. I wasn't sure I liked that. I wanted to paint again anyway.

2005 – 7 Our subtitling company was absorbed by a bigger company. I moved to a different company, but they only wanted me as a freelancer. (Sobs)

Moving back to Winchester, living with my parents. Subtitling at home. Drawing a bit in my sketch pad.

Getting the train now and then to an atelier-type school in Battersea, London, studying traditional painting. Painting the figure, portrait. Going in their office to see if I'd got any emails about subtitling. Going back to their office to check my emails again later.

2008 I get a space in a shared studio in Winchester, about half an hour's walk from home. The artists rent the studio from Winchester City Council. There's a lot of this

studio in my emails, “my studio space this, my studio space that”, etc. A friend emails me, “I promise not to take up too much of your precious studio time.”

I have a space in the studio by a window. The studio is freezing in the winter. I have a paraffin heater. I ask someone to change the barrel for me, as I’m scared it will explode.

I paint apples and cups and lemons over and over. I want to get somewhere with light and dark and tone. So the paintings have a feeling of presence, as in Rembrandt and Rothko.

Slide 4 St Catherine's Hill



2009 Shlepping up St Catherine's Hill with a ton of painting gear. My landscape studies done on board didn't work a lot of the time. Walking back down the hill, with a ton of painting gear, over the field, back to the studio, feeling tired.

2009 Sharing studio space with other artists. Sometimes they'd sit for a portrait. I'd play American folk music. Sam Amidon. The Weather Station. A couple of times, the music was so sad, my sitters cried.

Slide 5 Avon Beach, 2010



Offered a lift by my mum and dad to Mundeford Beach in Christchurch. They liked going to the beach after going to get kosher sausages. The intervals of the buoys on the beach helped to divide up the picture. Moving the horizon line – more land, or sky. Losing the paint in the sand. First cadmium red light, then alizarin then white. Dropping the picture face-down in the sand.

The Mundeford paintings, 25 x 30cm. I'd lie them flat at the back of the car and hope the car didn't move around too much and ruin them.

Slide 6 Winter Pears, 2010



2010 Some progress in the studio. Spending all day, for weeks, painting a little still life, 18 x 24 cm, and rubbing out the paint at the end of the day, because the light had changed. How many apples in a painting. Taking out the apples. Only three.

Slide 7 Self-portrait in electric light

2012 Exasperated because someone in the studio wants the light on. I like natural light for painting. Subtle colours.



Slide 8 and 9
Ripening Pears
2012 and 2013





Painting pears and lemons on a light background. Done in one go, because of rat visitors eating the apples. Highlights, which I don't do now.

Ripening pears. Wasn't sure what to call it so asked my mother. Ripening pears. A one-shot - I don't do many. Lot of erasing, then painting fast, and repeat.

2014 A drawing scholar with the New English Art Club, a British exhibiting society who champion figurative painting. They exhibit at the Mall Galleries, down the road from Trafalgar Square and the National Gallery. They talk about painting as a continuing tradition. And placing the colours next to each other. And working from the outside in. Visiting other painters in their studios. Seeing their work. Them looking at my work.

Life-drawing in a room at the back of the Mall Galleries on a Tuesday evening. Teachers from the New English.

They have been painting for years.

They made me want to do better. Slow down the drawing. Get the colours right.

February 8 2014 Went to NEAC member Tom Coates's studio. Horrible weather outside. We had pea and ham soup for lunch. They have beautiful paintings on the walls, everywhere. One by John Ward of some apples in a wicker basket. Tom Coates very funny. He advises longer lines - draw to the edge of the canvas or page. And no more varnish, as it is killing my paintings.

Peter Clossick from the New English advises me to measure by holding my hand right out, not halfway. I measure a lot.

2015 A move to another studio. Getting used to painting in that new space.

2015 A couple of awards. Having work in the New English Art Club show and the ROI, alongside good painters.

Slide 10 Packet Of Coffee, Pear, Milk Bottle, Blue Mug, 2015



Someone said the little fruit pictures (13 x 18cm) were nice but have more ambition. I was annoyed enough to go 25 x 30cm. That'll show 'em!

The milk bottle was to get a light light, to contrast with the greys and darks. I always had a milk bottle around for tea and coffee. So I must have been looking at the milk bottle and thinking that would be good. It would be a light light and fit in a board that size. Big milk bottle next to small apple. Milk bottle next to slightly taller packet of coffee.

I used to paint an orange packet of coffee then. I must have been drinking coffee and thinking I liked the colour.

I put in the blue cup at the end. I agonised over it. Then I regretted it. Then I thought it was OK.

I've been painting that blue cup for 16-17 years.

Slide 11 Conference Pears, Brassey Road

I've painted a lot of pears.



Slide 12 Milk, Coffee, Cereal, 2015



I move the big table nearer to the window to get more light on my arrangement of things on the table (cornflakes, a cracked cup, packet of teabags, cafetiere, etc). A big painting with packet of cornflakes. What do I like enough to put in a picture? Lot of moving things around. Wiping out.

Slide 13 Apple, Milk, Coffee, Corner of Fridge, 2016



Corner of fridge or sink in the pictures, moved into the room so I wasn't walking into the next room getting paint everywhere.

Slide 14 Blue Mug, Coffee, Milk, Pear, 2017

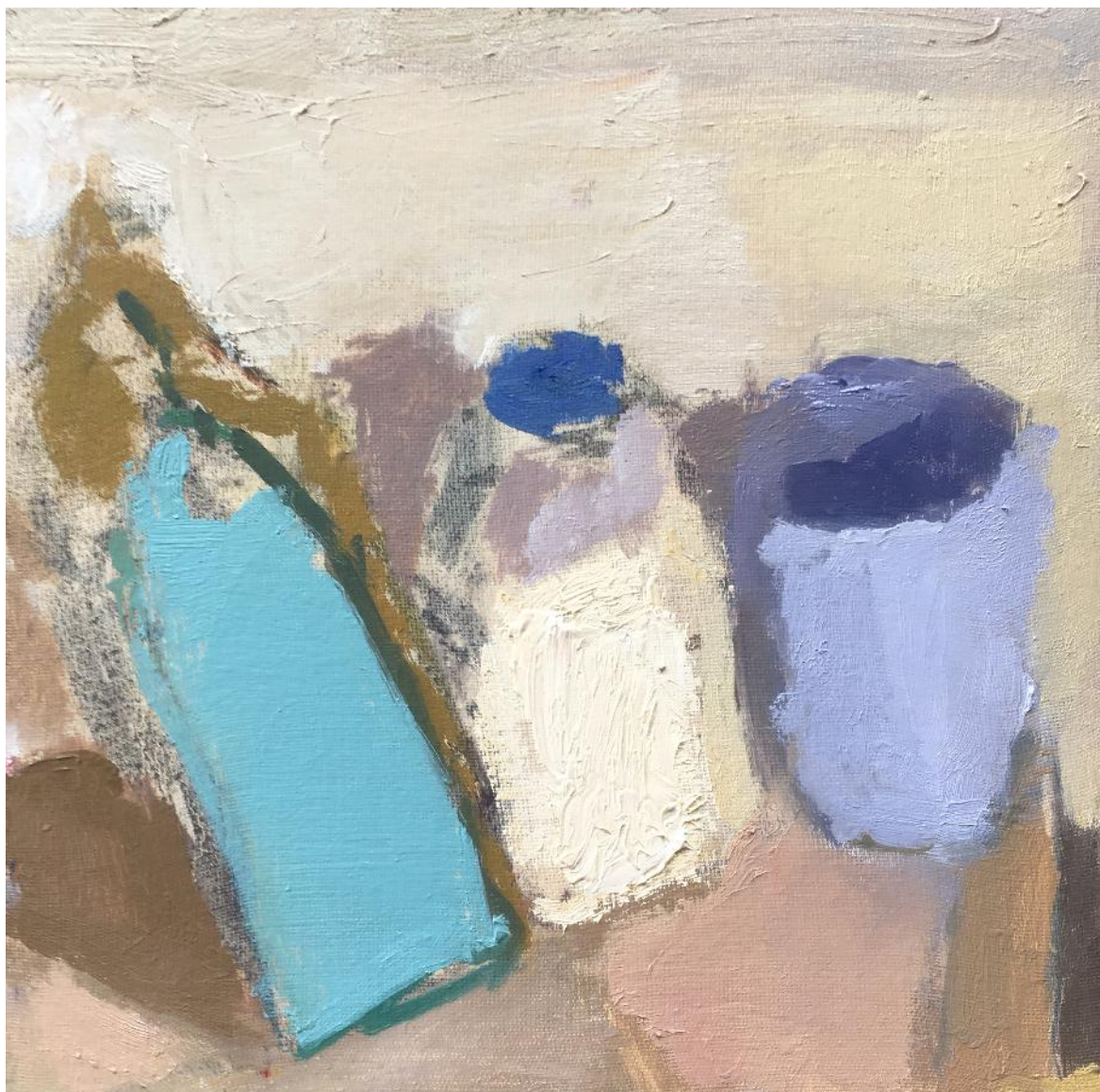


I'd moved into my third shared studio.
Getting used to the space. It had shelves.
Coffee painting. The way the red sort of
floats. Lots of revision and wiping away.

Painting a few pictures at a time. I'd heard
about this during artist interviews. I talked to
another artist friend and we both thought we
should do it. She was always wiping off the
paint as well.

I email a friend, 12 3 17. "Maybe it's good to
not be able to work on a canvas for a bit.
Then when you go back, you actually want to
work on it."

Slides 15 and 16, 2017





Square paintings. 25 x 25cm. A lot. I had a lot of square boards. I'd been meaning to do square pictures for a while. Vary the dimensions of the board. Because when I'd shown my work, someone had said the number of similar-sized paintings all lined up was monotonous.

What to put in the picture.

Green packet of coffee. Packet of crisps, very challenging. Packet of chocolate buttons, very challenging.

A cool palette, with the blues. The earlier work had been more to do with the shapes and I struggled to get the colours working together with those.

Slide 17 Satsumas, 2017

Because a student was painting them and we talked about it. It made me think I should paint them.



Slide 18

2017 The mirror satsumas.



The mirror for my self-portraits was near the satsumas. I liked how it added to the composition. And the sense of another realm in the realm of the picture. But mostly because the mirror was near the satsumas.

Slide 19 Murky mug.

I apply the paint with my fingers. I do not like the palette knife. Even though I love the paintings of Nicolas de Stael.



Slides 20, 21, egg carton

2018 I was going to put eggs in a picture but the egg carton was more interesting. I do a few with an egg carton. But prefer simpler shapes, maybe shapes that are less obviously what they are. I go for subtlety.





Slide 22 Black jar of marmite.

I'd been looking at the Marmite and thinking that would look good in a painting. Small dark shape. Shape not too complex.



Slide 23 Leaning apple, milk, coffee
I get more used to the colour of the wall.



Slides 24, 25 Long paintings

2019 I feel like a big painting is a bit beyond me. But perhaps a long picture. Three squares, like Ivon Hitchens.



Slide 26 2019 A mirrored bowl of fruit.
Feeling that the long pictures are a bit
austere. Is that all there is? That song.
Wanting something warmer, more
welcoming.



Slides 27, 28 Long paintings



Slide 29 Windowsill still life
March 2020



Painting at home, due to Covid.

Getting used to the space at home. Near the computer. The keyboard has paint on it.

Where in the room do I put the easel or the fruit. I had old greenish jars for turps, brought from the studio. They went in the background.

Putting things on the windowsill. A new development for me.

Slide 30 Plums Jars Mug

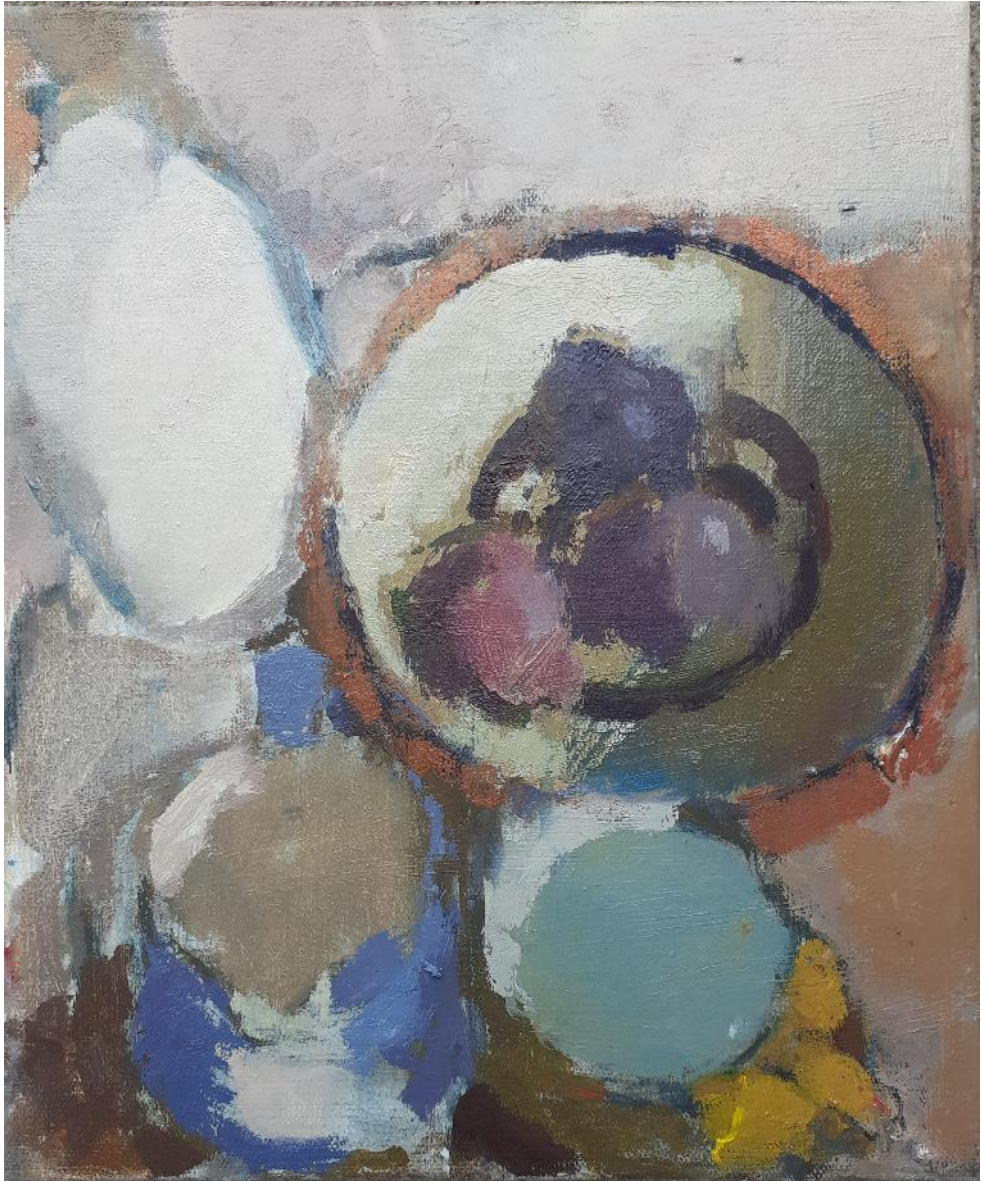
A shelf falls down with all the books on it and I start to put the still lifes on the shelf.

Plums. Very challenging, that blue. Going up and looking at the plums.



Slides 31 and 32 Looking down at things on a chair





Slide 33 Coffee and lemon

The lemon is pretty old.



Slide 34 Long still life

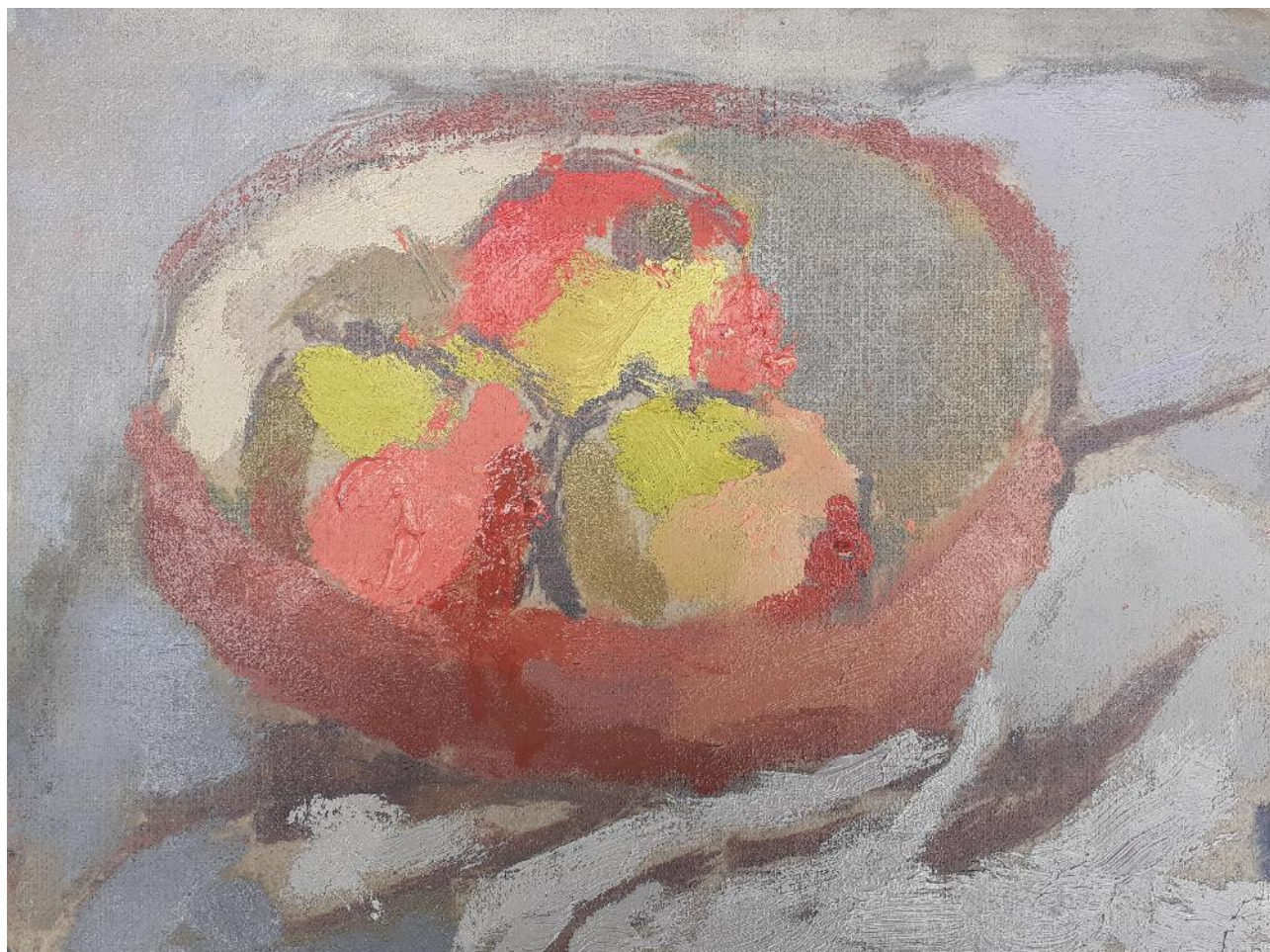


Slides 35, 36, 37, off-centre still lifes

2021 A few goes at apples and plums. I try to put them slightly off-centre. I'd been looking at people who put things in the centre, finding it annoying. Then thinking what if they are a little off-centre.







Slide 38, 39

The silhouettes of things on the windowsill.
Shadowy. To keep them as colours.





Slide 40 the self-portrait. Width, length!
Bcause a student had once said “I’m sorry
but your face is actually much narrower than
that.” If you’re reading this, Georgie, you
were right. Width, length!

