

“The Sitter” (My Fair Lady) by John

My reflections of the sitter are the most profound of the three “actors” in this important dialogue: The artist, the sitter, the curator.

In response to our conversations I wrote a short poem worth reading entitled “*Deciphered – My Fair lady*”

An extract from the poem is as follows:

Her spirit transcends image

Her voice calls out to me

Deep from the ages

Deeper still into my soul

Time stops.

Say what you seesay what you don't see.

I am emotionally drawn to her and I find it moving to reflect on what her image looking back at me says to me. I feel challenged to give her voice, honoured to give her humanity, proud to be her enabler, remembering for her, what must have been difficult times in a difficult place. A reminder of how things were, and in many ways the way things still are in some quarters of society today.

The sitter is actually the one actor I want to write least about. Not many words needed for me – the emotional connection is such a strong one in reality.

In stark contradiction in terms, “she looks like no black woman I know” as proffered by one of my colleagues in our discussions, yet I find myself drawn to the image, wanting deeply to represent her today as she was never represented yesterday. I feel a duty, a calling almost never to forget. She speaks to me in a way which charges me with a responsibility that has permeated aspects of my life, how I carry myself, a rejuvenation of my values, to uphold the most sacred of all things....love, for she reminds me that when all is said and done, remember this.....we are all human! Powerful stuff, I think I am welling up.

In many ways, it does not matter so much to me, whether she is a real sitter or a figment of Phil May's imagination.

The important point is the impact it has had and continues to have on me, every time I look at the piece.

Her story is my story, despite the way she is portrayed.